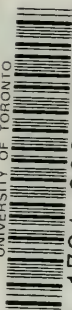


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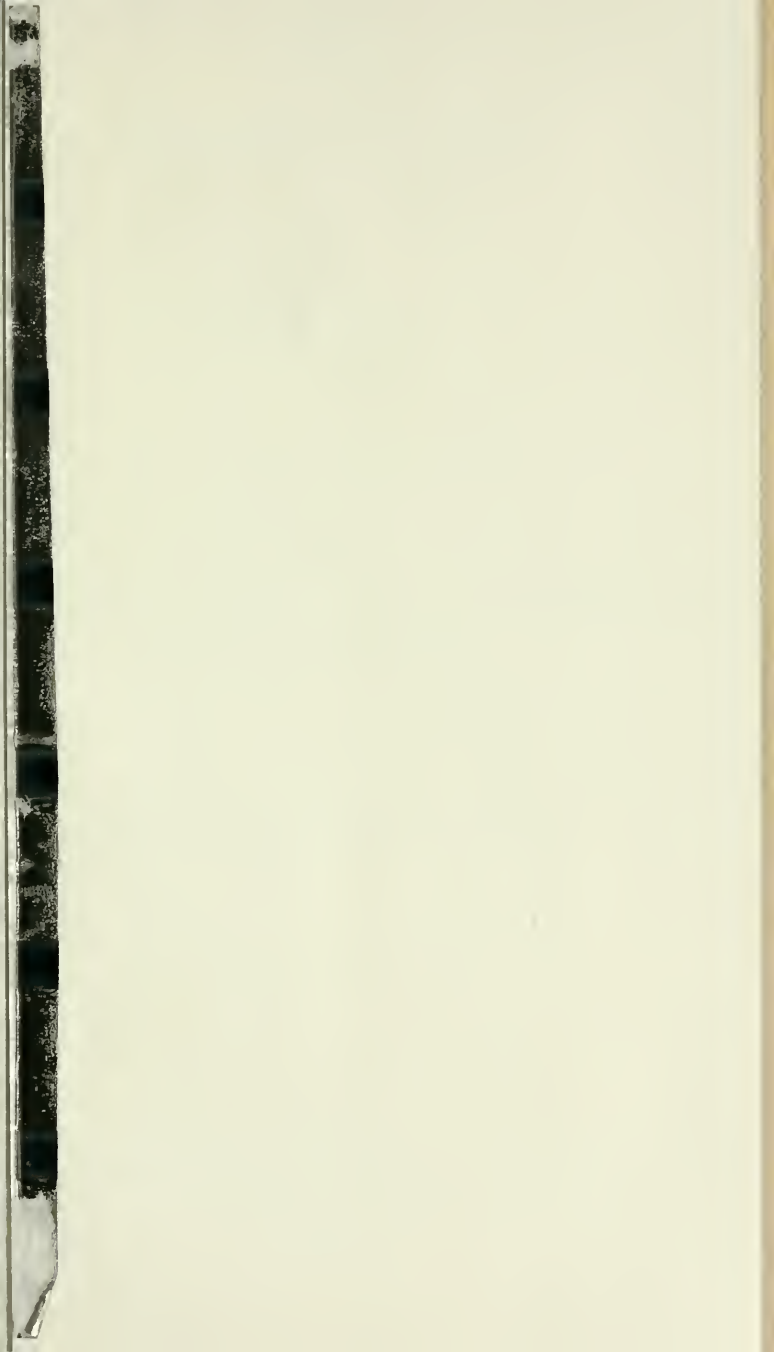






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87

DOMESTIC SCENES

IN

RUSSIA:

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

DESCRIBING

A YEAR'S RESIDENCE IN THAT COUNTRY,  
CHIEFLY IN THE INTERIOR.

BY THE

REV. R. LISTER VENABLES, M.A.

~~~~~

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXXXIX.

1839



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## P R E F A C E.

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I CANNOT venture to add another to the numerous books on Russia which have already appeared, without pleading as my apology that I visited that country under circumstances affording opportunities, not usually within a stranger's reach, of observing the habits and character of the people. I am, therefore, induced to publish the following letters, under an impression that some account of domestic life in the Interior may be, to a certain degree, interesting from its novelty.

Being nearly connected by marriage with several Russian families, I accompanied my wife into that country in the summer of 1837, for the purpose of visiting her relations, among

whom we spent twelve months, either in private houses in the Interior, or in habits of constant intercourse at St. Petersburg.

In the letters now offered to the public, I have given a simple detail of our sojourn in Russia, interspersed by a few general remarks and opinions naturally called forth. I have more particularly entered on the system of the conscription, the relative position of master and serf, and the situation and resources of the landed proprietor; and, in conclusion, I have ventured a few short observations on the character and government of the Emperor Nicholas.

The court, the capital, the army, the public institutions of the country, with its political position and views, have occupied the pens of far abler travellers: my object has been to give some description of private life, national customs, and domestic habits in Russia.

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## DOMESTIC SCENES IN RUSSIA.

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### LETTER I.

Arrival at Petersburg—Account of voyage—Proceedings of Custom-house officers at Cronstadt and Petersburg—Passport regulations.

*St. Petersburg, June 22nd, 1837.*

I LOSE no time in sending you, according to promise, an account of our safe arrival here, which took place yesterday, after a pleasant and prosperous voyage of a week. We sailed from London on Wednesday morning, the 14th, in the Countess of Lonsdale, for Hamburg, which we reached on Friday; and proceeding by land to Traavemunde, the port of the Baltic packets, ten or twelve miles from Lubeck, we sailed in the Naslednik, steamer, for Petersburg at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon. By nine o'clock on Monday night we were in the Gulf of Finland, the following morning we were off Revel;

and the captain said we should be at Cronstadt before twelve at night. We scarcely lost sight of land during the whole of this day, and both shores of the Gulf were frequently visible at the same time. The Baltic is a lively sea to traverse. In a steam-boat, one is never many hours without seeing land; and the having an island, which marks one's progress on the voyage, to look at, or to look for, is a never-failing subject of interest: the number of ships, moreover, with their white sails set, of which we could sometimes count one or two and twenty around us, helped to break the monotony of a sea view.

In this latitude we have at present no real night; the sun goes below the horizon for a couple of hours, but the sky retains a red tint, and the smallest print, or the palest handwriting, may be read with ease at a window at midnight. As we were so near the end of our voyage, no one thought of going to bed on Tuesday night. About half-past eleven, the paddles were stopped, and we were boarded by a boat from the Russian guard-ship, off Cronstadt, containing two or three personages, who immediately descended into the cabin, and examined the captain's papers. In about a quarter of an hour they departed, and we proceeded on our voyage, and by twelve o'clock were anchored at Cronstadt. The firing however of the morning gun, and the hoisting of the colours upon the flagstaff, reminded us, that after sailing so far to the east, it was necessary to advance our watches,



it being by Petersburg time two o'clock in the morning. On coming to anchor, we were immediately boarded by two or three boats full of custom-house officers and soldiers, who appeared to take possession of the ship. The soldiers were posted on different parts of the deck, under the command of a little subaltern; the passengers' luggage was brought upon deck, and ticketed with the word *unexamined*, a number being added to each article; and in this manner no less than three hours were consumed in the most disagreeable way. The deck was encumbered with luggage, at every turn one met a soldier in a dirty grey great coat; while the cabin was full of custom-house officers examining the passports, so that it was difficult to find a seat or a corner of a table at liberty.

At length, the custom-house officers departed, and allowed us to proceed up the Gulf, towards Petersburg, under the care of the little subaltern and his gang, who were left on board. Our delays were, however, not yet over, for in crossing the bar of the Neva, our boat ran aground, though she only drew about seven feet of water, and this accident detained us about three hours. At last, by means of two anchors carried out a-head, we were warped once more into deep water, and soon reached Petersburg, and came to our moorings at the English quay about twelve o'clock. Several officers now came on board, and the passengers were allowed to step on shore on receiving their passports, which had been collected soon

after leaving Traavemunde, by the captain's book-keeper. We were allowed to take our cloaks and great coats on shore with us, but nothing else. Thanks to a friend to whom we had written beforehand, we found a laquais deplace awaiting our landing, with the agreeable information that lodgings were engaged for us. It was necessary of course as the first thing, to superintend the examination of our luggage by the custom-house officers, which agreeable ceremony was performed in a large room hard by, which is set apart for the accommodation of steam-boat passengers. We were unlucky in being searched by a particularly surly old gentleman; but the examination, though strict, could hardly be called vexatious, except that a new silk gown of M—'s was very near being confiscated,—all articles of dress unmade, or which have not been worn, being contraband. A little representation, however, to a superior officer who spoke French, conquered this difficulty. All our books were set aside to be examined by the censor, even a map in a case being subjected to this scrutiny. They were all made up into a parcel and sealed with lead, and then delivered to me upon my signing a paper, in which I undertook to send them to the censor. The penalty for breaking or losing the lead seal is a hundred roubles, (about four guineas.) I then was required to sign one or two other papers, and received a permit for my luggage to pass, some small charges, amounting only to a few shillings, being

made for bringing it on shore, &c. The introduction of poisonous drugs into the country is strictly prohibited, and a small medicine chest which we had was detained for further examination, but was afterwards very civilly given up to me unopened. We were now conducted to our lodgings, which were near at hand, and tolerably comfortable; and after being up and restless all night, and all morning on board the packet, and during the examination of our luggage, we were exceedingly glad to find ourselves by two o'clock in a place where we could sit down at our ease.

After dressing and refreshing ourselves, we set forth with our *laquais de place*, whom we shall of course retain during our stay in Petersburg, to see a little of the city, which is very beautiful; but the weather being exceedingly hot, we came in thoroughly exhausted, and were glad to go early to bed, and sleep without the fear before our eyes of being disturbed by custom-house officers. I have this morning been to write down my name at the Alien Office, which is the only personal trouble given to a foreigner on his arrival by the police regulations. Our passport is given to our landlord, whose duty it is to forward it to the proper authorities, by whom it is detained; and a ticket of residence, as it is called, or a permission to remain in the country, which must be renewed on the 1st of January, every year, is sent in its place: this I expect to receive to-morrow or

the next day. For the ticket of residence a charge is made upon foreigners of five roubles, or about four shillings; from which persons of title, clergymen, officers in the Army and Navy, &c., are exempted. Our books have been returned from the Censor's office, with a certificate that they have been examined, and are permitted; so that all the troubles of a first arrival are over, and we may consider ourselves as fairly established in Petersburg. We do not mean however to remain here more than a few days, as the town is very empty, and we wish to lose as little as possible of the short Russian summer before we proceed into the interior, reserving the sights of Petersburg to be visited as we pass through on our way home.

## LETTER II.

Intended mode of travelling — Russian practice of bathing horses — Kazan church — Pavements in Petersburg — English church — Difference of calendar in Russia — Comparison between London and Petersburg — Equipages — Want of hackney coaches — Droschkas — Summer garden — The islands — The Hermitage — The Winter Palace — Military uniforms — Public buildings.

*St. Petersburg, June 28th, 1837.*

WE are on the point of leaving Petersburg, and only await a conveyance to take us southwards, which, strange to say, in this great capital, is at this moment a little difficult to meet with. The plan which we mean to pursue, and which is the most comfortable of any that could be devised for strangers, is to hire a small diligence, which will be at our disposal for the journey. It will contain four people, besides the driver and conductor, who will manage every thing upon the road, we paying a fixed sum for the journey before we start. We have engaged a man and a maid, the former of whom speaks English, and both speak German and Russian more or less. Most people are now in the country, but we have dined out twice with *Mom's* relations since we have been here; once in town, and once at a villa in the imme-

diate neighbourhood. The dinners were served in the style which I believe is universal on the Continent; nothing but the dessert being put on the table, and the dishes being brought in, and handed round successively. The chief peculiarity to be remarked here was the custom of handing round liqueurs, with cheese, caviare, &c., before we went into the dining-room. We had also some national dishes, such as mushrooms, of various kinds and of all colours, which, if they are to be found, at least are never eaten in England. The principal novelty, however, was a kind of cold soup called *Batvinia*, of which the Russians appeared very fond, and without which they declared that a dinner in hot weather could not be called complete. Like most foreigners, however, I found it exceedingly bad, and, indeed, perfectly uneatable. It is made with quass, (a Russian substitute for beer,) chopped cucumbers, onions, &c. It is iced, and a large slice of salt fish, sturgeon if it can be got, is eaten with it.

The Neva ran close before the windows of the villa where we dined, and in the evening we saw several horses brought down to have a swim in the river. There was a small raft moored close to the shore, round which a man walked, leading into the water the horse, who very quickly got out of his depth. The horses all seemed used to bathing, and I find that it is a general custom to give them a swim almost every evening during the summer. These

small rafts which one sees every where here in the river and the canals, are for the washerwomen, who stand on them with bare legs and wash the linen in the water at the side, or at a hole about four feet square, which is cut in the middle of the raft.

As we returned home we stopped to see the Kazan Church, which is the Cathedral of Petersburg. Another church, however, the St. Isaac's, which is now in progress, will, when finished, be far finer. The chief beauty of the Kazan Church consists in a handsome semicircular colonnade facing the street, and leading from either side to the principal entrance; and in the beautiful pillars of polished granite which support the roof. The dome is much too small for the size of the edifice, and the interior of the church is somewhat narrow. The pavement is entirely unencumbered by pews or benches, as is universally the case in a Greek church. The rails of the altar, which are handsome and massive, are of solid silver.

At the lower end of the church are a number of flags taken from the Persians, the French, and other nations. Against one of the pillars are suspended the keys of various captured fortresses, with brass plates, giving the name of each. Marshal Davoust's baton is also hung up in a conspicuous spot, in a glass cylinder, to protect it from injury.

Throughout Petersburg are excellent trottoirs for foot passengers; but the pavement of the streets in



general is disgracefully bad and uneven, the stones which compose it being of every possible shape and size. To fill up the crevices and give an apparent smoothness, a gritty sand is strewed in large quantities over the streets, and as they never are watered, in spite of the abundance of that element which the Neva and the various canals afford, the clouds of dust, or rather of fine gravel, with which the air is filled on a windy day, render it impossible to keep open one's eyes or move in comfort. In most of the principal streets, however, a wooden pavement has been introduced, which, when new and good, is extremely pleasant to drive over; it is free from dust, and the motion of the carriage over it is smooth and easy: it is, however, very expensive and by no means durable, not continuing more than two or three years in repair. The first process in forming this pavement is to smooth the ground, upon which a flooring of stout board is laid down: this is covered over with a thick coat of pitch; blocks of wood about six inches long, and cut into hexagons of about four inches to a side, are then laid endways on the boards, side by side, and fastened together by wooden pins: being equal hexagons, they of course fit accurately together, and form, till worn into holes, a smooth and compact pavement. The wood which is thus used is birch and fir.

On Sunday we attended divine service in the English church, which is very handsomely fitted up



and liberally maintained by the British Factory.\* The present chaplain is Mr. Law. Here we were strongly reminded of our distance from home by the change in the calendar, since, as you are aware, the old style is still in use in Russia. Whereas, therefore, according to our reckoning, it was the *twenty-fifth* of July, we heard the *thirteenth* morning of the month announced from the reading-desk, and instead of having reached, as was the case in England, the fifth Sunday after Trinity, we found ourselves here thrust back to Trinity Sunday.

There cannot, I think, be a greater difference between two capitals, each splendid of its kind, than between London and St. Petersburg, and the contrast is especially striking when one is transported by sea, as we have been, in the short space of a week, from the banks of the Thames to those of the Neva. Every thing here looks fresh and new; and the light-coloured stucco† of the houses, the air free from smoke, and the bright, clear stream of the river, which is just about the same width as the Thames, all contribute to give this city an outward character widely different from that of our own metropolis. In the population of the streets the distinction is not

\* In addition to their church establishment, the Factory have an excellent library, and I am most happy in this opportunity of expressing my thanks and acknowledgments to the gentlemen to whom it belongs, for the liberal manner in which English visitors at Petersburg are allowed the use of their books.

† The law requires that every new building in Petersburg shall be stuccoed in three years, at the furthest, from its completion.

less broadly marked. The uncouth peasant, in his sheepskin coat, the merchant in his long blue caftan buttoned on the left side, with black boots over his trowsers; and both with thick beards which have never felt a razor, are figures which present themselves here at every step, but which would certainly be followed by a gazing mob in London. The equipages also at Petersburg are, for the most part, quite unlike all that one has seen elsewhere. The private carriages, with four long-tailed horses, the wheelers driven by a bearded coachman, and the leaders, with enormously long traces fastened to the pole, and managed by a boy mounted on the off horse; coachman and postillion each dressed in a caftan or wrapper without a collar, fastened by a gay sash round the waist, and wearing a low-crowned hat of a peculiar shape, the coachman being adorned, if possible, by a handsome beard. The whole turn-out is frequently in as bad a style as a London hackney-coach, but the four horses keep up the dignity of the equipage. Many handsome carriages are built at Petersburg, and many fine horses are to be met with: but the average of both to be seen at present is decidedly very indifferent. It is not, however, a fair moment for forming an opinion, since the court is out of town, and most fashionable people have followed its example.

There are no hackney coaches in Petersburg, though there are plenty of vehicles, both open and

close, which may be hired in the streets; the fares, however, not being regulated by authority, it is necessary always to make a bargain before taking one. The *hack-cab* of Petersburg is the *droschka*, a very primitive vehicle, consisting merely of a bench about five feet long, covered by a cushion, mounted on four low wheels, and hung on C springs. The driver sits astride in front, resting his feet on an iron bar which projects on each side, over the fore axle-tree, and the passenger sits in the same way behind, where there is a low back for him to lean against, with his feet on the step on either side, protected from the mud by splashing boards over the wheels. If there is a second passenger, he sits sideways in the middle of the *droschka*. It is a most rude and uncomfortable conveyance, since one is entirely exposed to the weather, and the position of sitting astride on a bench is not particularly agreeable. There are, however, plenty of private *droschkas* to be seen, which are very neat and convenient little carriages for fine weather; they are, indeed, much like a pony phaeton, with a seat in front for the driver, and they are very easy, being hung upon C springs. Sometimes these vehicles are drawn by a pair of horses with a pole; but in general, like the *hack-droschkas*, they have shafts and are drawn by one horse, with his head borne up very high, a wooden arch resting on the ends of the shafts, and standing up over his head, with a ring at the highest part, to which the

bearing-rein is attached. No carriage, waggon, or other vehicle with shafts is seen in Russia without this arch, which is called a *douga*. An outrigger is frequently harnessed on the near side of the shaft-horse, without a bearing-rein, but with his head, on the contrary, drawn down almost to the ground, and turned outwards, as if he were flying away from the shafts. In this form he is made to canter and prance through the streets, while his companion trots steadily along. To droschkas occasionally, and to heavier carriages often, a third horse is harnessed in the same manner on the opposite side. This attelage, which is exceedingly pretty, is called a *troika*. The Russians always drive with snaffle bits and without blinkers;\* bearing-reins are never used except for horses in shafts.

The canals which run through Petersburg, and the sides of the Neva, are crowded with large clumsy barges, loaded with wood for winter consumption, and cut up into logs ready for use. Good-sized hay-stacks, thatched over, may also be seen apparently floating by themselves upon the river; a second glance, however, shows that the foundation is a low

\* From subsequent observation, it appears to me that the vice of kicking in harness is much less common with Russian horses than with English, though from the manner in which the former are often harnessed, and the slight pains which are bestowed on breaking them in, the contrary might have been expected. The reason, I certainly take to be, that the Russian horse has the use of his eyes, while the English horse imagines an invisible enemy in every loose straw or other harmless object which touches him unexpectedly. No people habitually drive so fast as Russians.

barge, almost entirely covered and concealed by the mass with which it is loaded.

We have, of course, visited the Summer Garden, the principal public promenade of Petersburg, which in this respect is very deficient. The garden has little beauty to boast of, but it is thickly planted with trees, and it, at least, offers abundance of shade. The walks are laid out in straight lines, and adorned by marble busts and statues, but the principal ornament is the celebrated palisade facing the river, which is exceedingly fine. The Russians have a story of an Englishman who came to Petersburg on purpose to see this palisade, and who rowed up the river to it, gazed at it, and having gratified his curiosity, returned home without having set foot on Russian soil. Though not quite worthy of so long a pilgrimage as this gentleman is supposed to have taken, it is a most beautiful work.

We drove, one lovely evening, through the islands formed by the different branches of the Neva, and which are crowded with pretty villas and gardens which in this hot weather look exceedingly cool and tempting, but which are uninhabitable, from damp, excepting in the height of summer. They, however, form at present a very gay and attractive scene as one drives among them, along a well watered road, a luxury which, as I have already observed, the city itself does not furnish.

One evening, about seven o'clock, we went out to

walk, crossing the Isaac Bridge, and following the bank of the Neva on the other side up to the Exchange, and the scene, as we walked slowly along, was certainly exquisitely beautiful. We were on the shady side of the river, while the light fell directly on the opposite side,—on the Admiralty, the Imperial Palace, and the other fine buildings which line the bank, as well as on the gay pleasure boats which crowded the broad bright stream; while facing us stood the well-known and splendid equestrian statue of Peter the Great on a granite rock as its pedestal. We could not help regretting that the ugly bridge of boats was not replaced by a structure worthy of the Neva and of the city which lay before us; for the beauty of the river, enhanced as it is by the fine granite quays facing it on either side, leaves nothing but a handsome bridge to be desired. The construction of one has hitherto been prevented by the extreme depth of water, which renders it impossible to build piers. A chain-bridge is talked of, but here also there are, it is said, some serious difficulties to overcome. We returned home by the garden adjoining the custom-house; it is, however, remarkable for nothing but the immense numbers of birds of all sorts, from a parrot to a linnet, which are exposed here in cages for sale.

One thing has struck us in walking about Petersburg, namely, the small appearance there is of communication with the country. Instead of the count-

less coaches, omnibuses, and travelling carriages of London, a solitary diligence, or a rare carriage with the appendage of trunks and imperials, is all that meets the eye.

We went yesterday to see the Hermitage, a friend having procured a ticket of admission for us. This palace is used as a picture gallery. Room after room is entirely covered with paintings, to examine which properly, would require frequent visits for weeks together. The collection is fine, but there are no catalogues, at least none are placed in the hands of visitors, so that a stranger wanders on without knowing where to find the pictures most worthy of attention, a very serious drawback to his pleasure in so extensive a gallery. Besides the paintings, we saw some splendid vases of Malachite, a beautiful green stone, which is found in copper mines in Siberia; with other works of art, antiquities, and curiosities.

From the Hermitage we passed into the Winter Palace,\* which adjoins and communicates with it, and which is the town residence of the Imperial family. The Hall of St. George, in which the Emperor holds his courts, is a magnificent room, both in its proportions and its decorations. The White Hall, in which the court balls are given, is

\* The Winter Palace was burnt, and every thing but the bare walls completely destroyed, a few months afterwards, viz., on the 29th of December, 1837.



extremely beautiful, and when it is lighted up, the effect must be most brilliant. Adjoining this hall is a smaller room, hung with crimson velvet, studded with the Imperial Eagle, embossed in gold: this is used for the reception of foreign ambassadors. A gallery, which opens into the Hall of St. George, is filled with portraits of all the Russian generals, who served, with that rank, during the French war: they were all painted by an Englishman, named Dawes, in a very creditable manner, and they are said to be in general good likenesses: Dawes received a thousand roubles, about forty pounds for each. In another room are the portraits of field-marshal only; of this rank the Emperor is extremely chary; he has at present but two, of whom one only is actually in his service, viz., Count Paskewitch, Prince of Warsaw; the other Russian field-marshal being the Duke of Wellington. Nothing can be more beautiful than are the private apartments in the Winter Palace: the decorations, which are chiefly in white and gold, are extremely rich, but in admirable taste; gilding of every kind, and the imitation of marble, especially white marble, are arts carried to a high degree of perfection in Russia: the splendid plate-glass windows complete the beauty of the rooms. The last room which we were shown amused us much, being the play-room, in winter, of the young Grand Duke Constantine, who is eleven or twelve years of age. It was full of ingenious and pretty inventions



for the amusement of the little prince: there were diminutive carriages and droschkas, sledges upon concealed castors, so as to run on the floor; a boat with a mechanical contrivance, so that a boy might row himself about the room in it; and a ship fully rigged, with a mast large enough to climb. There was also a slide of polished wood, in imitation of an ice-hill, and in one corner stood a little guard-house for playing at soldiers. In short, this room, with all its contents, was a perfect little boy's paradise, and was a very amusing sight to grown-up people.

To an English eye, nothing perhaps at Petersburg is more striking than the number of military in the streets: the usual force quartered in and about the city, amounts, I believe, to sixty thousand men; but at this time the greater part of them are absent, being encamped twenty or thirty miles off, for training and manœuvres: yet even now cocked hats, plumes, and uniforms encounter us at every step. We were at first somewhat surprised in this hot weather, to see the soldiers always buttoned up in their great coats, and the officers wrapped in their cloaks; I believe, however, that the former thereby save their jackets, which they leave at home, and that the latter are obliged to wear a cloak in the streets as a protection to the uniform, which would otherwise be very soon spoiled in this most dusty city. Though, however, economy or cleanliness may be one cause for this habit, the Russians are undoubtedly a very chilly race, and

delight in wrapping themselves up; indeed they say that to do so is a necessary precaution, owing to the sudden changes from heat to cold, which are experienced in this climate. Ladies walk about, even in this weather, enveloped in shawls and cloaks; and the peasants are always seen in their *shoobs*,\* coats of sheepskin, with the wool inside.

No soldier or officer, so long as he continues in the Emperor's service, even when on leave of absence, or when he is with his own family in the country, is allowed to appear on any occasion out of uniform.† The officers, when they retire from the service, if they have been well conducted, generally receive permission to wear the uniform of their regiment when they please, but without epaulettes. The persons employed in the civil service of the empire, in the public offices, the universities and institutions of every kind, including lawyers, doctors, and professors have also uniforms, which, however, they are only obliged to wear when on duty. The undress is merely a plain coat of blue or green, with gilt buttons, bearing a device; the full dress is worn with a sword, and much resembles a military uniform without epaulettes; it is completed by white breeches, shoes, and buckles, and cocked hat. I must observe, that a

\* Any kind of cloak or coat lined with fur is called a *shoob*.

† When an officer in this service goes abroad, he cannot lay aside the uniform till he has passed the frontier. If he goes by sea, he must retain it till he reaches the foreign port where he is to land, and he must resume it there on coming home.

Russian has no idea of a member of any profession, such as law or physic, however independent it may be according to our notions, being otherwise than "*in the service.*"

I should suppose that in no other city of its size are there so many public buildings as in St. Petersburg. One-half of the town is crown property, and consists of public offices, institutions, palaces (of which the handsomest externally is the one lately built for the Grand Duke Michael), and barracks, of which there are an inordinate number; sailors as well as soldiers being quartered in them.

*Wednesday Evening.*—The Nicolai steamer is just come in from Lubeck with the English post. She brings us the expected news of the death of King William the Fourth, on Tuesday last, and of the proclamation of her present majesty in less than a month after reaching her majority.

The moment of our departure is still uncertain: we hope to leave Petersburg to-morrow, but no diligence is yet to be had, and it seems very doubtful when one will be at our disposal.

## LETTER III.

Journey to Krasnoe—Diligence—Road—Bridges—Inns—Istvostchiks—Peasants' dress—Dreary landscape—Novogorod—Russian village—Military colonies—Torjok—Arrival at Krasnoe—Description of the place—Russian farming—Peasants' houses—Hospital and bath.

*Krasnoe, July 12th, 1837.*

You will be glad to see by the date of this letter, that we have reached the place of our destination for the present, and that we are fairly established as visitors in a Russian country house. We are now in the Province or Government of Tver, and about four hundred miles south of Petersburg. In my last, I told you we were anxious to start on our journey, but that no diligence was to be had, and we were detained for two days longer, making frequent but fruitless enquiries at all the offices. On the evening of the 30th, however, as I was returning home after an unsuccessful search, I fortunately spied the object of which I was in quest, namely, a diligence for four persons, passing slowly along through the street. My servant, who was with me as interpreter, ascertained that it

was just arrived from Moscow, and, having set down its passengers, was proceeding to the office. To this place I, of course, lost no time in making my way, and engaged the diligence, which I was told would be ready to start, if I chose, in two hours: I, however, preferred setting out in the morning.

Though we were only going as far as Torjok, which is five hundred versts, we were obliged to pay for the diligence all the way to Moscow, two hundred versts further. The price was three hundred and eighty roubles, somewhat more than sixteen pounds. A Russian verst is about three quarters of a mile: the rouble, if in coin, is worth about ten pence; if in paper, about ten pence half-penny: as in all payments the former is understood unless the contrary is explicitly stated, the rouble may in general be considered as equivalent to a French franc. The expense of engaging a diligence between Petersburg and Moscow is considerably more than that of posting, and the additional cost was of course still greater for us, since we were only conveyed about two-thirds of the distance, while we had to pay for the whole; for strangers, however, who arrive without any carriage of their own, it is very convenient to travel in this manner.

The vehicle having been brought over-night into the yard of our lodgings, for the convenience of packing the luggage, by nine o'clock in the morning of the 1st, every thing was ready; the conductor, who

spoke a little French, arrived; four horses abreast were put to, and we started on our journey, having delivered to the conductor our passports, authorising us to leave St. Petersburg. After passing the barrier, where a handsome triumphal arch is in progress of erection, and will soon be finished, we found ourselves on an excellent macadamized road, which is completed all the way to Moscow. The bridges are handsome and solid, being built of granite, with a cast-iron balustrade of an open pattern, exhibiting the Imperial Eagle, with helmets, swords, fasces, &c. The new bridges are not yet all finished, but the deficiency is in every case supplied by a safe, temporary wooden bridge.

At distances of from fifty to a hundred versts apart along this road, are handsome inns belonging to the crown; some of the apartments in them being reserved for the Imperial family, and only used for ordinary travellers in case of necessity. The inn-keeper has the house furnished, on conditions which forbid his charging any thing for the use of the rooms, which are kept always heated in winter: the traveller pays merely for what he orders, and the price of every thing, from a cup of tea to a dinner is fixed by a printed tariff which is hung up in every room, in French and German as well as Russian. These inns are a very great comfort and accommodation, for which travellers are indebted to the liberality of the late Emperor Alexander, who built them to re-

place the palaces which were formerly kept up along this road, at a great expense, for the use of the Imperial family, without any advantage to the public at large. We travelled from eight to ten miles an hour, and reached Torjok on the morning of the 3rd instant, after a journey of forty-nine hours. The post-horses are in general miserable-looking little animals, but they are much better than they appear, and can go both far and fast. No sort of care is taken of them, and the manner of treating them would soon destroy less hardy creatures.

The Russian postillions, *istvostchiks*, or, rather, *yemstchiks*, as they are called, always drive from the box. A great deal of time is lost in changing horses, an operation which we seldom performed in less than half an hour: there is always a great deal of bargaining and disputing as to who is to go, among the peasants who keep the post-horses, and the question seems generally to be decided by lot: they have, however, rules, though I do not understand them. We frequently were driven by a lad of fifteen, but they all seemed perfectly skilful in driving four-in-hand, though in a very different fashion from the team of an English coach. The *istvostchiks* seem, generally speaking, a gay good-humoured set of people: one stage, however, we had a very sulky fellow, who did not drive at all to the satisfaction of the conductor, and the latter rated him, till at last the man, in rage, stopped, jumped down, and was pro-



ceeding to take off his horses, and leave us in the road : the conductor, however, was soon at his back, threatening him with the police, and abusing him most violently, hitting him all the time tolerably hard over the head with a thick leather pipe, till the *istvostchik*, whom I at first expected to return his blows, at length remounted the box and proceeded.

The dress of the *istvostchiks*, is that of the Russian peasant in general. They wear a shirt, usually red, which is made without a collar, and which hangs, confined round the waist by a leather belt, over a pair of loose trousers, of blue linen or calico, which are tucked into a pair of boots reaching half way up the leg. Over this dress the Russian seldom thinks it too hot to wear his coat of sheep-skin, with the wool inside ; this, however, he throws off when he enters his house. The hat is low crowned, with a large buckle to the band, and the crown projecting all round : many of the *istvostchiks* adorned their hats with a peacock's feather twisted round them. The use of a razor is unknown among the peasants, and the rough untrimmed beards, in the colour of which red certainly preponderates, give the people a wild uncivilized appearance. The men wear the hair divided on the top of the head, and cut all round the neck like the edge of a bowl : they generally, when working, wear a band round the head to prevent the hair from falling into their eyes. The women as well as the men wear



sheepskin coats and boots, and they generally tie a handkerchief round their heads, so as to conceal the hair: they certainly are not very engaging specimens of womankind.

We travelled day and night without stopping, for we were anxious to make up for the time lost by our detention at Petersburg. Night journeying is, however, the ordinary practice in Russia, excepting for very weak and sickly people: every one is accustomed to it, and post-horses are obtained by night as readily as by day. There is little accommodation for sleeping at the inns; and where it is necessary to rest on the road, as in the case of bad health, or a very long journey, Russians always carry their own beds with them.

In point of view, we certainly lost little by travelling in the dark, for nothing can be more dreary or monotonous than the greatest part of the road from Petersburg to Torjok: after the first ten or twelve versts we entered a tract of forest, which stretched with few intervals for more than a hundred miles. The whole distance indeed exhibits little but a succession of bleak open country, and thick forest: the road runs generally in a straight line, and one proceeds for miles together along a dead flat, without seeing a human habitation; on each side, a boggy space of fifty or a hundred yards wide is kept clear of trees, and beyond that lies an impenetrable mass of birch and fir wood growing up so thickly that the produc-

tion of fine timber is impossible; indeed I hardly saw a tree which appeared more than twenty or thirty years old: here and there, where the trees had been cut down, was a neglected space full of grey stumps, and long drawn-up saplings, bending or broken for want of their former support, and many of them black and charred by fire; and the general desolation of the scene was enhanced by heavy rain, which fell almost incessantly. A journey through these forests is like a sea-voyage; one spot resembles another so much, that the traveller seems always to remain in the same place. The only part of the country through which we passed where the view is at all attractive is in the immediate neighbourhood of Valdai, a small town about two hundred versts from Torjok, on the edge of a handsome lake, in which is an island containing a monastery, and around which is some pretty broken ground covered with wood. The only two other towns of any consideration, through which we passed, were Novogorod and Vishny Volotchok. The former, though its name, if literally translated, would be simply New-Town, is one of the most ancient places in Russia: it is situated about two hundred versts from Petersburg, on a fine navigable river, the Volchova, over which is thrown a new and handsome stone bridge. The fortifications of Novogorod were in former times considered impregnable; the place sustained many a siege, but I believe that it retained to the last its reputation as a

maiden fortress: there is in the town a ruined Kremlin, a name which seems to have been generally applied to the fortified palace or citadel of a Tartar prince. A few miles on this side of Novogorod, the road crosses another considerable river, by a bridge of boats, which will soon be replaced by a solid structure of stone. Here, the last time M—— was in Russia, travelling with her brother, she narrowly escaped a somewhat serious adventure. They were in an open calèche, and their *istvostchik* drove them, as these men often do, at a gallop, down upon the bridge, without perceiving that it was open in the middle for a boat to pass. M——, however, instantly remarked the danger, and pointing it out to her brother, they both called loudly to the driver to stop; but this, at the pace they were going, was not easy to effect, and carriage and horses would most probably have been precipitated into the river, had not the *istvostchik* contrived to run the pole into a load of hay, which was fortunately standing in the way, waiting for the closing of the bridge.

On the road, we met frequent droves of fine fat oxen on their way to Petersburg; they were mostly of a dun colour, and came from Little Russia and the southern provinces. The cattle of the country through which we passed were invariably small and poor, and the sheep and pigs long-legged and ugly. The sheep are of all colours, black, brown, and speckled, but seldom white.

An ordinary Russian village presents a dirty and cheerless aspect; but in some of those belonging to the crown, through which the high road passes, the wooden houses, especially if new, were really very pretty and picturesque. They are built with a gable facing the street, across the front runs a gallery with a neat balustrade, and the weather boards are very handsome, being carved in open work like lace: the windows have almost all outside shutters, which are gaily painted with flowers, and similar ornaments, in bright colours.

Near Novogorod is one of the military colonies established by the Emperor Alexander, who thus endeavoured, with doubtful success, to make the same instrument, both sword and sickle, spear and ploughshare.

The results of the system remain to be seen, but the organization of an armed and disciplined peasantry is considered by many to be an experiment which some day or other may prove hazardous to the tranquillity of the empire. This colony has once already felt its strength in a most ferocious revolt, which, after a great part of the officers had been most cruelly put to death, was suppressed only by the presence and commanding firmness of the Emperor Nicholas in person. All that we saw in passing was a very long line of cottages, lying parallel to the road. In the centre was a semi-circular space, containing the church and the officers'

houses: behind lie the fields, which are tilled by these soldier-husbandmen.

Torjok is famous for leather embroidered in gold and silver, and in various colours, for reticules, slippers and belts.

Since we were here to quit the Moscow road and the diligence, M—— had written to her father, begging him to send a carriage to meet us, and we accordingly found that a coach and six, with another vehicle drawn by three horses, and called a *tarantass*, had been awaiting our arrival for some days. The *tarantass* was intended for our luggage, but it is generally used for the conveyance of servants, and is, I believe, very common in Russia; this, however, being the first specimen of such a vehicle which I ever saw, struck me as singular from its novelty: the best description which I can think of for it, is the body of an old cabriolet or small britschka, lashed on the middle part of a light timber carriage. It has no springs, but the elasticity of the long birch poles which connect the two axles, and on which the body is placed, renders the motion, as I am told, tolerably easy.

After a breakfast, which was preceded by the refreshment of a comfortable toilette at the inn where we stopped, we set out to perform the remaining part of our journey to this place, which is fifty versts, or about eight-and-thirty miles from Torjok. We now bade adieu, with regret, to the excellent macadamized *chaussée*, and enjoyed for the first time the luxury of

an old-fashioned Russian road not improved by two days of incessant rain. I dare say when I next travel that way, after being a little accustomed to the country, I may think the road very tolerable; but like many new acquaintances, we certainly, on this occasion, found it highly disagreeable, though here they laugh at us for complaining. However, it must be remembered, that we already had had quite enough of the motion of a carriage after travelling for two days and nights. Be the road, however, as it may, we travelled but slowly over it in spite of our six horses, which were driven according to custom, four a-breast, with a pair of leaders, and a postillion, (of course on the off-horse;) we stopped half-way to bait, and it was ten o'clock at night before we reached Krasnoc. Here we were most kindly welcomed and received by M—'s father and all the family; comfortable apartments, consisting of bed-room, dressing-room, and sitting-room, had been prepared for us, and we were glad to enjoy a good night's rest, after our journey; we slept well, and I believe it was tolerably late when we appeared at breakfast the following morning.

As we had arrived in the dark, we of course had seen nothing of Krasnoe as we approached, and I was curious to discover what sort of a place it was, and to see something of the country, and though the weather continued rainy and disagreeable, I set off immediately after breakfast with General P—y to

make the tour of the premises. The ground slopes down from the house to a large and handsome piece of water, and is laid out in the style of an English garden, with flower-beds, trees, shrubs and grass; at the further extremity is a grove of handsome birch-trees, where the ground is intended to imitate a park. The whole, including the water, is very pretty, but the space is too extensive to be kept in the perfect order which a garden requires; indeed, although there is no separation, the greater part is rather in the style of a pleasure-ground. At the same time, sheep and cattle are never admitted to graze as on an English lawn, so that the grass is coarse and rank. The architecture of the church, which is close to the house, is considered remarkable as being a species of Gothic, a style uncommon in Russia. It was built in imitation of a church erected by the Empress Catherine, to commemorate an action in the Black Sea, when the Russians burned the Turkish fleet, and it has five domes, all surmounted by the Greek cross, placed over the crescent.

This edifice was erected by an ancestress of M—'s, a lady who built no less than twelve churches in the Government of Tver, and who was altogether a very remarkable person. She inherited a large fortune, and was married at the age of fifteen, having been brought up on the principle of never doing any thing she disliked; so that she had no education, and could hardly read or write. She had twenty-three children,



of whom ten came to years of maturity: she survived her husband many years, and was nearly ninety years old when she died. After her husband's death, if not during his life-time, she was sole mistress of his property, which she increased till she accumulated an immense fortune by extraordinary energies and talents for business; and she died, leaving large estates to each of seven sons and three daughters.

The second day of our visit brought a decided improvement in the weather, and I had a drive with the General after breakfast in a low phaeton, to see a little of his estate, which consists of apparently sound good land, chiefly arable. The grass land will not bear a comparison with English pasture, and the crops of hay also are very light, though they are here considered particularly good this year. The horses, sheep, pigs, and horned cattle which compose the live stock, are small and of a very inferior kind, but I am told that the expense of improving them by a mixture of foreign breeds, is very much disproportioned to the profit thereby derived. The animals of every kind are necessarily housed at night, even in summer, on account of the wolves, which are very numerous and troublesome in this neighbourhood. In the morning the whole stock goes out to feed, and remains during the day under the protection of a herdsman, whose badge of office is a whip, which he carries over his shoulder, with a short handle, and a long heavy lash trailing for several feet along the ground behind him.



With this implement he soon reduces to order, and brings back to the herd, any refractory animal which is inclined to stray: the want of fences renders his constant attendance necessary. There is an abundance of water and wood, birch, and Scotch, and spruce fir, both for fuel and ordinary uses on the estate, which also contains lime and brick earth.

The peasants live entirely in villages, of which at Krasnoe there are four, the mansion-house, with its appendages, forming a part of the largest: this is, I believe, a universal custom in Russia, where solitary houses are rarely seen. The roofs are covered either with thatch, boards, thin sheets of iron or guttered tiles, as slates are unknown; the most usual, because the cheapest covering for the peasants' houses, is a slovenly thatch. These houses are, however, in general, extremely warm and substantial; they are built for the most part of unsquared logs of deal, laid one upon another and firmly secured at the corners, where the ends of the timbers cross, and are hollowed out so as to receive and hold one another: they are also fastened together by wooden pins and uprights in the interior. The four corners are supported upon large stones or roots of trees, so that there is a current of air under the floor to preserve the timber from damp; in the winter, earth is piled up all round to exclude the cold; the interstices between the logs are stuffed with moss and clay, so that no air can enter. The windows are very small, and are fre-

quently cut out of the wooden wall after it is finished. In the centre of the house is a stove called a *peeck*, which heats the cottage to an almost unbearable degree ; the warmth, however, which a Russian peasant loves to enjoy within doors is proportioned to the cold which he is required to support without : his bed is the top of his *peeck*, and when he enters his house in the winter, pierced with cold, he throws off his sheepskin coat, stretches himself on his stove, and is thoroughly warmed in a few minutes.

There are two important appendages to the village of Krasnoe, which must be mentioned, viz. the hospital for the peasants, and the bath.

The former is under the superintendence of a German doctor who lives in the house, and is engaged at a fixed stipend. This provision for the proper attendance of their people when sick, is an act of humanity which, I believe, the proprietors of few estates in this country neglect if they can afford it.

The Russian bath is indispensable in every village, and there is scarcely a servant or peasant of either sex, whether young or old, who does not use it every Saturday in the year. You are aware that it is a vapour bath. A room containing a stove is furnished with benches rising like steps one behind the other to the roof : stones are heated on the stove, and water is poured upon them, so as to fill the room, which is carefully closed, with steam. The bather commences by placing himself on the lowest bench, and

gradually ascends till he reaches the highest, where the heat of course is greatest; he also promotes the circulation of the blood, and increases the action of the heat upon his skin, by flapping himself all over with small birch twigs. He will often rush out of the bath when at the hottest, plunge into cold water, or even roll in the snow, and return.

This weekly purification of the person must tend greatly to the health of the Russian peasant, whose long hair and beard, and sheep-skin coat, are not favourable to cleanliness.

## LETTER IV.

Mode of life in the country—Language—Russian patronymics—  
System of country visiting—Guests—A dinner visit—Village fête—  
Russian swing—Intense heat—Remarks on the gaiety of the  
people—An enthusiast—A runaway serf.

*Krasnoe, August 10th, 1837.*

WE have now been here nearly six weeks, though I can scarcely persuade myself of the fact, so quickly and agreeably has the time flown by. Our life, however, has been extremely quiet and regular. We breakfast about nine, or half-past, after which M—— and I retire to our own sitting-room, where we occupy ourselves, without in general being interrupted, till at two o'clock we all assemble for dinner; after dinner some of the ladies usually visit our room to work, talk, and read; towards five we think of going out to walk, ride, drive, or row; at seven we have tea, after which we go out again, and often come in but just in time for supper at ten or half-past ten. We have a boat somewhat less than a barge, which I pull, often with three or four passengers on board, and considering her tonnage she goes wonderfully

well. The lake, which has been formed by damming up the waters of two brooks flowing into one another, stretches up a hollow to a considerable extent; and as we can penetrate both of the little rivers for some distance, we can easily enjoy a pull of an hour and a half or two hours.

Besides the members of the family and ourselves, we have also, as inmates of the house, a German doctor and his wife; this gentleman, I have already mentioned, is engaged to attend the family and the peasants in sickness; and a little orphan girl, of noble birth, but ruined fortune, whom the young ladies educate according to a charitable custom extremely prevalent in Russia.

I have not made much progress in the Russian language, beyond acquiring the names of a few articles of every-day use. It is admitted by common consent to be extremely difficult, and strangers, who merely intend to pass a short time in the country, have little inducement to bestow much labour upon the study. All Russians of the educated classes speak French, with as much facility in general as their native tongue, and many of them use it almost as much as Russ. in talking to one another, even when no foreigners are present. The Russian language, however, it is said, is rapidly gaining ground in fashionable society, owing to the encouragement of the Emperor, who very wisely will not allow himself to be addressed by his subjects in any other, and who is highly

displeased when it is spoken or written incorrectly. One cause for the general habit of talking French, probably is the want of bells, and the practice of having servants constantly in the ante-rooms close at hand, and within hearing of the conversation. The important precept so carefully instilled into English children, *always to shut the door after them*, is unknown in Russia.

*really?*  
The Russians have no words, at least none are ever used which correspond to *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, or *Miss*; and in speaking of, or to one another, in their own language, they use the christian name, subjoining that of the person's father with the termination—added, *ovitch* or *evitch*, *son of*, and *ovna* or *evna*, *daughter of*. Thus John son of Peter is called *Ivan Petrovitch*, and Anne daughter of John, is *Anna Ivanovna*. In this manner, without any title of respect, the servant addresses his master or mistress, and the soldier his officer. One of the first points, accordingly, which it became necessary to settle on our arrival here, was the providing us with suitable Russian patronymics for the benefit of the servants. M—— became quite naturally Maria Alexandrovna; and, after some consideration, I received the euphonious name of Rodivon Rodivonovitch.

The ordinary routine of life which I have described, has been varied now and then by an occasional visit. The system of country visiting in Russia, is carried on upon the hospitable principle, that a

friend is always welcome. The distances are so great, that morning calls are of course in general out of the question, and, excepting on particular occasions, such as a fête, invitations are rare. Neighbours sometimes send over to announce their intention, if it is agreeable to you, of coming to dine, or to spend a night or two at your house; but there being no cross-posts between country places, the most usual thing is, that your guests arrive unexpectedly a little before the ordinary dinner hour. This system has many inconveniencies, though it is unavoidable in Russia, where people frequently cannot send beforehand to prepare you for their visit, and where, moreover, they do not like to pledge themselves to go twenty or five-and-twenty miles, over bad roads, to dine and return at night, with the chance that the day fixed for the visit may prove rainy or disagreeable. These unexpected visits are considered highly complimentary, though from the quantity of servants and horses with which Russians travel, the numbers to be provided for *impromptu* are sometimes rather formidable. For instance, on one occasion, when three parties chanced to arrive here to dine and spend a day or two unannounced beforehand, though the guests themselves amounted only to five or six, they brought with them ten servants, and sixteen carriage-horses. A single man seldom moves with less than two servants and four horses, and the Russian country-house has no neighbour-

ing inn to which the latter may be inhospitably consigned.

The etiquette of visiting, in general, is altogether different in this country and in England. With us, it is always considered the part of the person of higher rank, or of older standing in a society, to make the first advances in forming an acquaintance; whereas in Russia, it rests with the new comer to select his society among those to whom he is introduced, and he calls upon those whom he desires to know. I think, without prejudice, that the English custom is decidedly the better and more reasonable of the two, since here a stranger, and especially a foreigner, is often at a loss to decide whether his visit will be considered an intrusion, or his omission to pay it an act of ill-breeding.

Among our other guests were a lady and gentleman with a name very difficult to pronounce, and which I will therefore translate into literal English, and call them Mr. and Mrs. Longfield. Though they live thirty versts, or about three-and-twenty miles hence, they are looked upon as neighbours, and, in fact, they merely came to dinner, and went home again in the evening—with their footman, by-the-bye, standing up behind the carriage, as if they were driving about town. This, however, it seems, is considered no hardship by a Russian servant, especially if the foot-board is upon springs: when they are tired of standing, they sit down with their back



to the carriage, and in this way they will travel any distance.

The Longfields, on taking leave, pressed us much to pay them a visit, which we accordingly did the following week, sending a messenger a day beforehand to announce our intention. As the distance was long, we set off about eleven o'clock, and traversed an open country, for the most part over unmade roads, like the tracks across an English common. In about two hours we descended a very steep hill, at the foot of which flowed the Volga: which is here ninety miles from the source, and already a fine stream about two hundred yards wide, with a rapid current deep and clear; it runs in a narrow valley, which it appears to have worn for itself through the surrounding plain. We crossed the celebrated river on a floating bridge, and after ascending the steep hill on its further bank, and gaining the level country, we soon found ourselves at the place of our destination, which stands on a fine elevated spot over the Volga. The windows were, however, turned away from the river, and presented no view but that of a formal old fashioned garden, filled with lime trees closely trimmed and planted, in straight lines on each side of the walks. After going round the garden we returned to the house, where we found a dejeuner set out in the drawing-room, consisting of caviare, cheese, &c., and, of course, liqueurs. This was tasted and dinner immediately

announced, it being now three o'clock. In the middle of dinner, some English bottled porter was handed round, and considerable amusement was excited by my declining the offered improvements of lemon and pounded sugar, which the Russians often drink with porter, and which our kind host had supposed indispensable to an Englishman. After dinner we took a short walk, and on our return found a dessert of fruit laid out in a pretty balcony filled with flowers, upon which the drawing-room windows opened. This was followed by music and singing, till, at half-past six tea made its appearance, accompanied by ices; and immediately afterwards we took our departure, and got back to Krasnoe to supper at ten o'clock, having paid a visit of five hours, to accomplish which we had travelled nearly fifty miles with the same horses over very indifferent roads.

A week ago we were invited to a village fête, about fourteen miles hence, which was given by a relation of M—'s, in honour of his lady's *jour de nom*, that is the day of the saint after whom she is called. A Russian never has more than one christian name, which must always be that of a saint; but, according to the Greek calendar, there are three hundred and sixty-five saints' days in the year, and few saints have an exclusive day to themselves, so that there is no lack of choice. We reached Troitska about one o'clock, and found in front of the house a long row of tables, at which all the peasants, with their wives

and children, had just finished dining; they had been well provided with beer, followed by a glass or two of spirits to each; and they were now assembled round the door of the house, shouting and singing with all their might. On the steps of the house were large baskets full of gingerbread, which the entertainer and his guests were throwing in every direction among the crowd, and the peasants, men and women, boys and girls, were scrambling for it with the utmost eagerness.

After the scrambling was over, we were entertained by a national dance, the execution of which had no great merit to boast, especially as some of the performers were drunk: the music was a monotonous ditty sung, or rather screeched, at the pitch of their voices by the performers themselves. We soon afterwards sat down to dinner, and the singing was continued under the windows by four or five pair of vigorous female lungs, during the whole time that we were at table.

The swing, that most necessary appendage to all Russian country festivities, which is seen in every village and in every gentleman's garden, was of course kept in full play. After dinner we found that the peasants had apparently got tired of amusing themselves, and had gone home to their houses. About six o'clock we drove to see a neighbouring gentleman's garden, which was somewhat celebrated in the country; the proprietor received us most

civilly, and showed us over his garden, which was his hobby: it was large and well kept, but for the most part dull and sombre, being laid out chiefly in straight walks, entirely shaded over by trees, which, however, were old and of a considerable size, so as to impart a degree of respectability to the place. The garden was decorated by large formally shaped ponds, at one end was a stew filled with pike, and close by, a tawdry summer-house of painted wood.

We returned to Troitska to tea, and drove home in the cool of the evening, or rather in the dark.

On the following day (August 5) a degree of heat set in, such as I never remember to have felt before. Its continuance was fortunately not very long, for on the 8th (the day before yesterday) we had a thunder-storm which cooled the air, and the heat is now moderated. During the three days, however, of its intensity, it was impossible to stir out of the house till seven o'clock in the evening; I had a head-ache during the whole time, and sat all day absolutely gasping for breath, unable to find a cool spot. It was well for us that the days were not at the longest, and that the power of the sun was therefore somewhat diminished. The summer has been considered on the whole as a very cold one in this country, where heat, such as we have just experienced, sometimes lasts uninterruptedly for weeks, bringing all the crops rapidly to perfection, and compensating by its intensity for the shortness of a Russian summer.

A few years ago, so great was the drought and heat in this neighbourhood, that the grass was scorched, the earth smoked if turned up, and the forests in many places took fire from the dryness of the trees.

The first impression produced by the merriment of the peasants at their village fête, may be a conviction of the happiness of the people, and of their readiness to be pleased and amused.

It does not follow, however, because the Russian dances and sings, that he is to be considered happy for his station. On the contrary, it surely is a melancholy spectacle, and even degrading to human nature, to see bearded men scrambling like monkeys for gingerbread, and delighting in the sports of children.

These people undoubtedly were not oppressed; they were under a kind and considerate master, and they wanted for none of the necessaries of life: they, therefore, as individuals, were not to be pitied, and knowing no better, were probably contented with their lot: but the chain of slavery was on their minds, as it is on the minds of the Russian peasantry at large. They know that they can do nothing to change or improve their condition, and therefore they have no stimulus or excitement to energy. They have no habit of acting or deciding for themselves, and are in fact mere grown-up children, equally thoughtless and improvident: as such, indeed, are they treated by law and custom. With

little in the world to hope or fear, since to rise is out of the question, and to sink impossible, and with a naturally easy, and cheerful disposition, they sing, and dance, and play like children on a holiday, with a light-hearted merriment, which is not happiness; the reckless hilarity of intoxication, forgetful of yesterday and careless of to-morrow, not the sober satisfaction of rational contentment.

While the vast extent of Russia, and her thinly scattered population continues to render food, shelter, and clothing cheap and abundant, the peasant may continue to laugh and dance in his fetters, careless or unconscious of his degraded position; but should the pressing evils of want or scarcity arise to disturb his thoughtless gaiety and empty merriment, he will become a morose and discontented slave; his eyes will be opened to a sense of his condition, and woe to that generation, both of lord and serf, in which the light shall break forth; for unless the country is far more generally civilized and enlightened than at present, a revolution must commence in bloodshed and end in anarchy: the elements of true liberty are not to be found as yet in Russia.

A man was lately brought back here by the police, who had run away from his wife seven years ago. When he was asked his reason for absconding, he said, that he had been compelled by his family to marry when very young, that he thought it wicked to have a wife, and that his greatest desire was to

become a monk. Since his return, he has thrown himself at the feet of the young ladies whenever he could meet with them, intreating them to intercede with their father to permit him to enter a convent. This, however, will not be allowed, for fear of the example being followed. This man has been to the monastery of Solovetskoi, which is situated on a small island in the White Sea, in a dreadful climate, and frequently cut off from all communication with the main land. Here this poor man wished to have remained, and to have entered the order, the rules of which are most severe; but as he had no passport or permission from his master to show, the monks were prohibited by law from admitting him. When he arrived here he was examined, and it was found that he had on an iron belt next to his skin around his breast, supported by iron straps over his shoulders, and with two iron plates hanging from it one before and the other behind; the whole apparatus weighing between seven and eight pounds; it was rivetted on, and had in some places eaten into the flesh. He had put it on by way of penance for having deserted his family, and he begged earnestly that it might not be taken off; this, however, was done, and when he was afterwards asked, if he should wish it to be given back to him, he said, "No; that there would be no merit in wearing it now, since every body knew of it." As he was not permitted to become a monk, his next request was, that he might be ap-



pointed to attend the cattle and sheep in the field, in order that he might not be shocked by the language and profane songs of the other peasants. This request was complied with, but I cannot say whether he has become reconciled to his situation. He is a singular but at the same time evidently a very sincere enthusiast.

The conversation about this poor man has naturally produced a variety of stories bearing a resemblance more or less to his case. The following is one of these anecdotes. Some years ago a peasant, named Peter, ran away from Krasnoe, and was not heard of for three years, when one day a man was brought by the police as the runaway. Some doubt was expressed by various people as to the identity of the new comer, but he insisted that he was Peter; the fact was confirmed by his wife and father, as well as others who had known him formerly, and the point was at last admitted. The man lived at home with his wife for about a fortnight, but he behaved so ill, that it was determined to make a soldier of him,—a most severe punishment to a Russian peasant. Before, however, the threat could be carried into effect, the man again absconded, and was not seen for about a month, when he had the impudence to appear at Krasnoe at a village feast, to share in the amusements of the day. In the mean time his real character had been discovered, namely, that he was a deserter from the army, and had become acquainted with a brother



of the runaway peasant in prison, where he had learned some particulars of his history; and also that he was in person somewhat like himself; on the strength of which information he had grounded his imposture. When, therefore, he appeared at the feast he was immediately apprehended, and the next morning sent off to prison. He, however, said he had escaped out of gaol a dozen times before, and should do so again. Whether he kept his word I do not know; but it is a singular fact, that the true Peter returned home the same night that the impostor went to prison: how far he was pleased to hear of the temporary usurpation of his conjugal and domestic rights is somewhat doubtful.

## LETTER V.

The Blessing of the Waters—Visit to Grouzine—Visit to Velmogie—  
Greyhounds and harriers—Wolf hunting—Hare hunt—Russian  
sporting—Varieties of the hare—Overturn in a gig—Hay harvest—  
Corn harvest—Agricultural implements.

*Krasnoe, September 1st, 1837.*

SINCE I wrote to you last, we have been paying some visits, of which you will probably like to have an account. I will, however, begin my letter by relating a curious ceremony, that of blessing the waters, which we witnessed here, and which is performed every where in Russia on the 13th, (or, according to their style, the 1st,) of August and the 18th, or, as they consider it, the 6th of January. The ceremony on the 1st of August is in commemoration of the death of the Virgin Mary, and a fast of fourteen days commences with the month.

About ten o'clock in the morning, at the conclusion of mass in the church, the priest, followed by the congregation, came down to the piece of water below the garden. He himself bore the cross, and two banners belonging to the church, with sacred

devices, were also carried at the head of the procession. A service was then performed: that part of the fifth chapter of St. John, which relates to the pool of Bethesda, was read as a lesson, and the priest, standing upon a small platform, reverentially dipped the cross three times in the lake, after which he sprinkled the people around with the water thus consecrated, and the procession then returned to the church. The greater part of the people, however, remained at the edge of the water, which, from their proceedings, it might have been supposed, was now endowed with the miraculous virtues of the pool of Bethesda. Horses were brought down from every side, and compelled to swim in the lake; women dipped their babies in the water; young men, girls, and boys dashed in, and swam about in every direction, all except a few little children retaining their clothes. The girls appeared to swim quite as well as the boys. The day was luckily bright and fine for the exhibition of this singular scene.

On the 14th we went to spend two or three days at Grouzine, a place some thirty miles hence, belonging to an uncle of M—, General Constantine Poltoratzky, from a second visit to whom we only returned two days ago. I was introduced to Constantine Markitch, as he is called in Russian phrase, who is one of the most universally popular men I ever met with, and one of the most agreeable and amusing. His lady and his son were old acquaintances, as we

had dined with them in Petersburg a few days after our arrival. The former was a Princess Galitzin, and descended, through her mother, from the kings of Georgia, her great-grandfather having been the last who sat upon the throne, from which he was driven by the Russians. His son, Madame Poltoratzky's grandfather, attempted to regain his crown, but was overcome and thrown into prison, where he died, and his grandson, her uncle, enjoys the title of Prince of Georgia, with large estates in Russia, given to the family in lieu of their lost dominions.

The house is large and handsome, though it might be better arranged in the interior, and the garden upon which it looks is extensive and prettily laid out, with a piece of water running through it. Here we spent two days much as they might have been spent in a large English country house, except that we dined at four instead of half-past six, and supped at eleven. The whole establishment is on a very handsome footing, with all appliances for making a visit in the house agreeable. Nothing could exceed the kindness of our reception; we repeated our visit the following week, and before we came away, promised our host and hostess when we leave Krasnoe, which will be in about a fortnight, to spend some time with them at Yaroslav, of which province the general is military governor.

On the 23d we went to visit another uncle, about sixty miles hence, at a place called Velmogie. We

travelled all the way with the same horses. The road was exceedingly bad, and when we reached our journey's end, we found we had, from ignorance, made a detour of seven or eight miles. That we had done so was not wonderful, as villages were few and far between, and our road was, in some places, a mere turf track through brushwood. At one spot, where we had to cross a small river, we found the bridge out of repair, no parapets, and only a road over it just wide enough for the wheels to pass, and any thing but smooth or safe. Russian coachmen, however, manage to drive heavy carriages through roads and over places which we in England should consider impracticable for wheels, and we met with no disasters. We, of course, were obliged to bait the horses, and we stopped for this purpose at a village about half-way, for there was no town on the road. In default of an inn we put our horses in the priest's stable, and bought from him hay and corn: our luncheon, which we had brought with us, we ate in the carriage, since we could not well take meat into a priest's house during a fast.

The morning after our arrival at Velmogie, we found our windows looking out upon ornamental ground, laid out in excellent taste, such taste, indeed, as I have never hitherto\* seen in Russia. The garden was well laid out, the trees and shrubs judi-

\* Or since; landscape gardening is not greatly in vogue, and little understood in Russia.

ciously planted, and there was a handsome piece of water which had the effect of a river. The chief fault which I noticed, was the ordinary error of having more grass than can be kept neat and well-mown. The great beauty of the place, however, arose from the ornamental ground extending beyond the garden, which in this country is rarely seen. The view from the house is bounded by a natural bank, which lies covered with wood in a very happy position, so as to shut out a bare and ugly line of country, while it encloses between itself and the garden, a very pretty sweep of cultivated land. This bank is laid out in walks, and at the end of it, on a small elevation above the water is built, among the trees, a small Grecian temple, which contains a family monument, and which forms a very handsome point of view from the house. The kitchen-garden and hot-house abounded in fruit; gooseberries and currants, of which the crop was enormous, raspberries and strawberries, besides cherries, which were very fine, grapes, melons, and water-melons. This latter fruit, which is seldom seen in England, is grown in great quantities in Russia: they are always put for some time before they are to be used, into the ice-cellar, and are brought to table as cold as possible, when they are excellent. Cherry-trees, at least those of choice sorts, are always planted in a house, (without glass,) the roof of which is taken off in summer, and put on again before winter, to protect the trees from

the frost: even with this precaution, however, they often perish in a winter more than ordinarily severe.

Ice is a good thing, of which for a great part of the year Russia certainly enjoys rather a superfluity: but the abundance of it in summer is a very great luxury. Instead of being taken, as in England, from any stagnant pond, and then pounded into a mass, the ice is here selected from the purest water, and placed in solid blocks in the cellar, so that it is perfectly bright and clean. It is not only used to ice butter, water, wine, &c., but plates full of it, in small lumps, for putting into one's glass at dinner, always appear at table. The ice-cellar answers the purpose of a larder, and forms an appendage to every peasant's house.

Our host after breakfast invited me to see his kennel, where he had nine or ten couple of harriers, and five or six brace of greyhounds, and he kindly proposed to take them out for my amusement the following morning, although the corn was in general standing, and the sporting season had not yet commenced; however, I was curious to see how Russians hunted, and it was settled that we should go out the next day at five in the morning, if it did not rain.

The greyhounds were really magnificent animals, exceedingly tall, and altogether much larger and more powerful than any I ever saw before; their coats were long and silky, and their tails bushy like those of setters. Two of them are indeed a match



for a wolf, and their master had promised before my arrival to arrange, if possible, a wolf-hunt against the time of my visit; however, for this purpose it is necessary to collect a great number of peasants to drive the woods in a line; but the harvest had now begun, and the peasants were too busy to be spared, the project, therefore, unfortunately for me, fell to the ground; I should have much liked to see a hunt of this kind. Wolves abound in this country, but it is difficult to find them, as they are very shy and cunning, and hearing hounds at a great distance, they will never await their approach. Hounds can seldom kill a wolf, owing to his powers of endurance, but his back-bone being very inflexible, he is unable to turn quickly or in a small space, while he cannot match a greyhound in speed; for this reason, when once found, he is easily caught and mastered by them if they understand their business, and seize him by the throat; since he can neither avoid them by doubling like a hare, nor turn suddenly upon them in defence.

To return to the subject of our visit: some neighbours arrived to dinner, which was laid out, the day being warm and pleasant, under a large lime-tree in the garden. An example, by-the-bye, which I should recommend no one to follow in the month of August, since, however agreeable it may be in some respects, the constant dropping of the flowers into one's plate and glass, is no improvement to their contents.



Among the guests were a lady and gentleman named Lovoff, connexions of the family, who invited us to dine with them as we returned home, which we accordingly did, their house lying near the road, looking over an extent of woodland, which reminded me of an English park. Madame Lovoff and her family have a great talent for working in wax, of which in her house we saw two beautiful specimens, a Mameluke on horseback, and a Magdalen in a cave. We were told also that a traineau with two horses in wax, which we had seen at Petersburg in the Hermitage, and the extreme beauty and delicacy of which had excited our admiration, was the work of this lady's mother.

On the morning after our *al fresco* dinner I woke early and looked out, but as it was pouring with rain, and there seemed every probability of the bad weather continuing, I gave up all idea of our projected sport, and went quietly to sleep again. However, about six o'clock, finding the rain had ceased, I got up, and before I was dressed, was told the master of the house was ready, and after a slight breakfast, we set out together. He was equipped in a great coat with a spencer over it, and a red comforter round his neck; a pair of very loose black velveteen trousers, lined down the parts which press the saddle with black leather like a dragoon's, and strong water-proof boots without spurs. A cloth cap completed his attire. The black velveteen trousers

are, I am told, commonly worn for hunting in Russia over another pair, and they are not bad things for wet and cold.

I was mounted on a rough unpromising looking horse, which, however, belied his appearance, and proved to be in reality a good one. I found, indeed, that he was a Don Cossack, which breed of horses is famous for action and endurance, though coarse-looking and small.

We had four piqueurs dressed in military-shaped frock coats of blue cloth, edged round with gold-coloured lace, blue trousers, and caps of orange-coloured cloth, with broad black velvet bands; there was also a fifth man, who was, I believe, a valet-de-chambre, and who was dressed somewhat differently. All these were mounted on small active horses of the same description as mine. Three of them wore short swords; and had horns slung over their shoulders. Two managed the greyhounds, and the other three hunted the hounds, for the sport was a combination of hunting and coursing; the object being that the hounds should find hares in the covert and drive them into the open ground to be coursed by the greyhounds. In this manner they sometimes kill twenty in a day; they also kill foxes, and occasionally a wolf; the latter, however, as I have already said, is in general difficult to meet with.

We threw off among some bushes flanking and connecting two small woods. The hounds were un-

coupled amidst a din of whips cracking, horns blowing, and men hallooing; in short, all pains were apparently taken to excite the pack to the highest possible pitch of wildness, and certainly not without success. Away they went into cover giving tongue like hounds who already wind a fox. "That is no hare," quietly remarked my companion, "it is only their joy at getting loose." The joy, however, was not easily subdued, and their cry continued with little interruption to be heard through the woods for about half an hour, when it was asserted they had found a hare, although, as nobody had seen it, I was sceptical enough to doubt its existence. At last a hare really made its appearance, and afforded a short course to the greyhounds, which it escaped by doubling back into the wood. Two men were always stationed outside the covers in favourable spots, each with two or three greyhounds; these dogs knew their business very well, and kept quietly in their proper places; each wore a collar with a ring, so that he could be led if necessary, the men having long leashes for the purpose; this, however, appeared to be seldom used except for young dogs not properly broken in. When the hare turned back into cover, the hounds were cheered on, and they took a ring through some rough ground; the hare was again driven from the wood, but the greyhounds did not catch sight of it, and in the end it was lost. My object, at first, was, if possible, to prevent the greyhounds seeing the hare, in

order that we might have a hunt and a bit of a gallop ; however, I soon discovered that when from the nature of the ground there was no chance of a course, the harriers very soon either were called off the scent, or threw up their heads of themselves.

As the corn was for the most part standing, we had some difficulty in finding ground favourable for our sport, and where the ground was suitable, hares were scarce ; however, we found one now and then ; some we killed and some we lost, occasionally hearing a pretty burst in a wood, or having a gallop from one cover to another. We got home by about one o'clock, and I had been on the whole very well amused, though my host was very much dissatisfied with his morning's sport, because the ground had been in general very unfavourable to the greyhounds, and we had only killed in all three or four hares.

This which I have described is the universal style of what is called hunting by the Russians ; they look upon hounds merely as instruments to find game for the greyhounds, upon whom they depend entirely for amusement. They cannot at all, excepting those few of them who have tried fox-hunting in England, conceive the pleasure of that style of sport, or imagine it to be otherwise than extremely dull, since they do not at all enter into the pleasure of riding with the hounds : riding indeed is at all times little in vogue, and they never think of mounting a horse as a means of conveyance. Their pleasure consists

in looking at a course, and all that they require is a small active nag worth from five to ten or twelve pounds. Tame as this sport appears to our ideas, many Russians are extremely devoted to it: a gentleman whom I met the other day, told me that he had a neighbour who lived for nothing but hare-hunting; he kept twelve hundred dogs, (hounds and greyhounds,) and killed annually on an average eighteen hundred hares: my informant calculates that this gentleman has got thrown into heaps the skeletons of about eighteen thousand horses. What a treasure, as manure, these bones would be to an English farmer!

There are two kinds of hares in Russia, one of which lives entirely in the woods, and is much darker coloured in the summer than the English hare. Towards the middle of October it begins to change its coat, and is perfectly white by the middle of November. The other sort resembles the English hare in summer; in winter its legs, ears and belly become white, but the back retains its colour; this kind, which is called the *roussak*, lives in the fields, and is rarely found in cover, never in large woods. Its flesh and its fur are both very superior to those of the wood hare, which is much more common. Both sorts, but especially the *roussaks*, are, I think, generally speaking, larger than English hares.

After spending two days at Velmogie, we repeated our visit to Grouzine and returned here, as I have

already told you, two days ago. Yesterday I was driving one of the young ladies in a gig, when, as we were proceeding at a walk along an indifferent piece of road about nine miles from home, we were to my great surprise, very quietly upset, and were both rolled out unhurt upon the grass: after picking up my companion, I went to release the horse, who stood perfectly still, and I found that one of the shafts of the vehicle, which was old and crazy, had snapped in two under the body, and thereby caused the accident, since we were not on level ground at the time it broke. We called to our assistance a peasant who was passing, and he, with a piece of wood and a cord, quickly spliced our broken shaft, and enabled us to reach home in safety.

The hay harvest, which began about the middle of July, is only just finished, and the corn harvest is now proceeding actively. The hay harvest is tedious, owing to the large surface, in proportion to the produce, over which the scythe has to pass, though I am told that the crops this year were in many places three times as heavy as they were last summer. They have a few large meadows, but the greater part of the hay is procured from little patches of rough ground on the outskirts of a wood amongst the bushes, or from little hollows which are not cultivated, owing to the water hanging in them. I have seen fifty mowers at work in one place, and one day they had a hundred and fifty mowing in one

meadow. The hay is not in general dried in the field, but is loaded as soon as cut, on waggons drawn by oxen, and brought into a large yard, or piece of ground adjoining the barn, and is there opened out to dry. They have no hay forks, but instead they use the butt end of the scythe handle, or a forked stick. The latter is the only implement they have for pitching up the hay into the barn. The hay is generally housed the day after it is cut; none of it is put into ricks. They make it as soon as it is dry into large cocks; under each cock they thrust cross-wise, two long stakes, leaving one end of each standing out; they then pass a rope round the cock and attach it to a horse which draws the hay thus held together along the ground to the barn. When the distance is short, the trouble of loading and unloading waggons is thus saved, and two horses will in this manner bring in a vast quantity in the course of the day; the tenth cock, as it is brought in, is weighed and taken as the average. The whole quantity of hay made this year at Krasnoe, not reckoning the stock laid in by the peasants, which must be considerable, was about a hundred and ninety seven tons, all harvested in excellent order. The average value of hay in the country is about eight shillings and threepence per ton; sometimes, however, it is as high as thirty-three shillings; and at Petersburg, it rises occasionally to fifty-five shillings a ton; this, however, is considered a ruinous price.



All the crops this year seem very good, except the rye, the staple food of the country; it is generally thin and bad, and in many places a total failure; it is chiefly housed by this time, they began cutting it on the 15th of August, but the harvest this year is later than usual. Besides rye, oats are grown here in large quantities, barley and flax to a considerable extent, and a good deal of hemp: there are also a few pease, and some small patches of spring wheat, which, however, looks very unthriving; a few hops are to be seen around the villages, and potatoes and cabbages are largely cultivated for human consumption; the former vegetable has, I believe, not been introduced among the peasantry to any great extent, till of late years; and even now they rely much more upon the cabbage, which they have a peculiar mode of pickling for winter food, since they cannot always preserve potatoes from the frost.

They always here begin sowing rye on the 18th of August, as it is the anniversary of the consecration of the church. They have a mass, after which they proceed to a field near at hand, when the priest pronounces a blessing, and offers a public prayer for the success of their labours. Though the sowing on this day is a mere form, the seed-time commences immediately afterwards in good earnest; and the young corn is already in some places beginning to make its appearance.

As soon as the corn is cut, it is dried on a sort of



kiln, threshed out, and stored up in large bins in the granaries. Here there is a threshing machine worked by horses, but the flail is used by women as well as men. I have seen the peasants often threshing their own corn without an implement of any kind, merely taking up the sheaf by the lower end, and beating the heads upon a spot of hard dry ground, swept clean as a threshing floor. They dry their corn by fires in large open sheds built on purpose; but sad calamities are, as might be expected, the frequent result of this dangerous practice. All the agricultural implements in general use are rude in the extreme; the peasant's spade is a mere paddle of wood, sometimes shod with iron, but more often not; his plough is an ineffective instrument drawn by a weak pony, and his harrow merely consists of boughs fastened together with the thin branches cut off a few inches from the base so as to form projecting teeth: his waggon does not contain above two or three barrows' load, but it certainly is as much as his miserable horse can draw. Every peasant is a petty farmer, and the wretched state of agriculture which exists is, I conceive, the natural consequence of the system.

## LETTER VI.

Journey to Yaroslav—Tver—Avant-courier—Cross-roads—Passing a ferry—Kaskine and Ouglitch—Russian travelling—Navodka and Nachai—Arrival at Yaroslav—View from Government-house—Volga—Military church—Regiment of Cantonists—Officer taking the oaths of allegiance—Horse fair—Dinner—Frost—Society—Card-playing—Mode of marching—Nobility—Rank and Title—Military grades given to civilians.

*Yaroslav, October 3rd, 1837.*

My last letter made you acquainted with our projected visit to this place, where we have now spent upwards of a fortnight most agreeably. My time has been so constantly occupied, that I have never had leisure for writing to you, and I sit down now to wipe off the arrear.

We left Krasnoe on the 13th of September, being provided with a travelling carriage by the kindness of M. ~~de~~'s father. Our regrets at quitting the place, which had been our home for nearly three months, and our leave-takings with those from whom we parted, I shall pass over in silence, and proceed to Tver, which we reached the same afternoon. The General sent us with his own horses the first eight-

and-thirty miles, having dispatched a set half way over night, so that we found six fresh horses awaiting us. We hired horses to take us the remaining stage of about two-and-twenty miles, which lay along the high road between Petersburg and Moscow. Tver, the capital of the province, or government as it is called, of the same name, in which our time had hitherto been spent, is a city of considerable size, situated on the right bank of the Volga, which we crossed by a bridge of boats on entering the town.

Here we were obliged to sleep, as some arrangements were necessary before we could proceed on our journey, since the remainder of our route lay for the most part along a line of cross-roads little frequented, and on which no regular posting stations existed. However, owing to the kindness of the Governor, Count Tolstoy, all the difficulties which we should otherwise have had in procuring horses were done away. Our present hosts, when they invited us to Yaroslav, had promised to bespeak Count Tolstoy's good offices for us, and to beg him to furnish us with the means of proceeding through his government.

On arriving, therefore, at Tver, I sent a note to the Governor, applying for an order for horses, and his secretary immediately came and said that every thing should be done for our accommodation, and that he would return in the morning, when all would be ready for our departure. Accordingly, as soon as

we were dressed in the morning, the secretary appeared, bringing with him the requisite papers from the Governor, who, he said, had also desired him, as we were foreigners, to place at our disposal a courier to enforce his orders on the road. This kind offer we gladly accepted, and the courier's activity and attention were of the utmost use, to say nothing of the uniform which he wore, and which carried no small authority in itself. As we had no place for him about the carriage, he preceded us in the *tilèga*, or light waggon, with a pair of horses, which is always used on such occasions in Russia.

We gave him two hours' start, in order that he might have time to get horses ready for us at every stage, and about eleven o'clock we set out ourselves. We travelled for about sixteen miles, in the course of which we changed horses, without a minute's unnecessary delay, along the Moscow macadamized road, being driven at a steady gallop of about thirteen miles an hour. This pace was kept up for some time after quitting the *chaussée*, the bye road into which we struck being pretty good. We soon came to the bank of the Volga, which we followed for some miles; and we then crossed to the left side of the river, by a floating bridge, and immediately afterwards found ourselves at the end of our second stage. Here, and everywhere else we found horses in readiness—thanks to our valuable courier in advance. The stages varied in length from fourteen to thirty-four *versts* (the

verst you will remember to be about three quarters of a mile). We were posting with eight horses, viz. two for the courier, and six for ourselves, but the expence was not ruinous; a halfpenny per horse per verst, which was the price, with about eightpence a stage for the drivers, brought the whole cost to something less than sixpence a mile.

After quitting the second station, we were obliged to proceed for some miles at a foot's pace. The road lay through a marshy forest of stunted unhealthy birch and fir, while a small misty rain, which began to fall, was completely in accordance with the desolate scene through which we were passing; and a more dreary picture could not easily be conceived than that which presented itself in this part of our journey. The road was what the Americans call a corduroy road, consisting of logs of wood laid across side by side, and by no means even. The pleasure of creeping over this species of causeway, for some miles, may easily be imagined. At length, however, we got into an open country, and a better road; the weather, at the same time, improved, and by eight o'clock at night we had a bright full moon over our heads with a cloudless sky, which accompanied us to the end of our journey.

We had no inns upon the road, but about seven o'clock, at a village where we changed horses, we supped in an *isba*, or peasant's house, where we were supplied with cream and hot water for our tea, and

cups to drink it out of; this accommodation is to be had in every village almost, and from sixpence to tenpence is the usual charge. For tea and sugar, and indeed every thing else, not forgetting bread, the traveller must depend upon himself, since, unless he is a Russian born, he will not be able to eat the black rye-bread of the peasants.

The *semăvar*, or Russian urn, heated with charcoal, which is found in every house from the highest to the lowest in this country, is an excellent invention, insuring good tea, since the water is always boiling, and the teapot being placed on the top, is kept quite hot.

We proceeded all night upon our journey, and about two o'clock in the morning came to a river, which it was necessary to cross by a floating bridge. The leaders were taken off, since there was not room for them with the carriage upon the bridge, which was small and narrow.

The river being shallow at the edge, the bridge could not be brought quite close to the bank, and we therefore had to drive through water for about the length of the carriage to reach it; and then, there being no proper gangway for the wheels to run up, the bridge formed a high step or block against which they rested. The four wheelers either could not, or would not, draw us over this obstacle, and, after two or three vain jerks, refused the collar altogether. We could not get out of the carriage, without stepping

into water up to our knees, which, in a frosty September night, we did not feel inclined to do. The bridge was so narrow, that, if they had put to the leaders again, and had succeeded by a sudden spring in forcing the carriage upon the bridge, they probably would not have been able to stop it in time to prevent our running across into the river on the other side, where the water was deep. We, therefore, remained stationary for about half an hour, when the ferryman, who had gone for assistance to a village close by, returned, bringing with him about twenty peasants, who took off the horses, and, with the aid of levers, soon placed us on the floating bridge.

Nothing can exceed the ready good will with which a Russian peasant gives his assistance in case of need, especially where, as in this case, he is remote from great towns, and great roads. These people were called up in the middle of the night, and they were employed up to their knees in water for some time, in raising the wheels over the obstacle; but they continued the whole time in the most perfect good humour, and there was none of the swearing and abuse of one another, which would, in many countries, have been heard on a similar occasion. They apparently considered that they were merely rendering an ordinary service to their neighbour the ferryman; and, after we had crossed the river, they merely demanded through him a trifle, in addition to his ordinary charge, for their assistance.



They commonly address each other as *brat*, or brother, and their superiors use the same term in speaking to them; indeed, a master, in giving an order to his servant, often calls him brother.

In about four hours after crossing the river, we reached the town of Kashine; here, however, we made no stop, but passed through and changed horses a verst or two further on. Kashine is a very old town, built in a straggling manner on steep broken ground, intersected by ravines: it once possessed a Kremlin, and was strongly fortified. Like all ancient Russian towns, it is filled with churches, and the various views of it which presented themselves to us were extremely singular and picturesque. When we stopped to change horses we breakfasted, in the same manner as we had supped the night before, at the house of a peasant, who furnished us with hot water and cream: the latter is a luxury which is to be met with almost every where in Russia.

At the next station we overtook our courier, who had horses ready to take us to the town of Ouglitch. He had already given us his services for about a hundred miles, and he offered to proceed, if we liked, to Yaroslav. However, we considered that it would be unnecessary to take him further, as M—'s uncle, to whose house we were going, had promised to order horses to be in readiness for us at every stage in his government, which we had now entered. We therefore dismissed our courier with a small recompence



for his services, and proceeding on our road, reached Ouglitch about one o'clock. Before we entered the town we crossed the Volga for the third time since the commencement of our journey, on a floating bridge. We drove, as we had been directed, to the house of the Gorodnitch, an officer who is, I believe, at the head of the police of a town, at least so the word seems to imply. This gentleman, who spoke French, gave us the agreeable information that he had received the promised instructions from the Governor, and that he had horses prepared for us, and he invited us into his house until they were ready. The horses, however, did not appear for more than an hour, and it was nearly three o'clock before we were able once more to set out, having still nearly eighty miles between us and Yaroslav.

Ouglitch, like Kashine, is a very old town; it contains about four thousand inhabitants, and there are no less than twenty-four churches, besides two convents. None of the churches, however, appeared externally as handsome as some of those which we had seen at Kashine.

The first stage from Ouglitch was thirty-four versts, and the road, for a great part of the distance, lay through a heavy sand. The horses were knocked up before they had finished their work, and during the latter part of the stage, the *istvostchik* got down from the box and stood upon the pole, leaning with his back against the edge of the footboard; his object

seemed to be, by getting closer to the horses, to give his whip more power. We found horses awaiting us at the end of the first and second stages from Ouglitch; but at the last station, before reaching Yaroslav, those which had been ordered for us had, owing to some mistake, been sent away, and we were detained there more than an hour. The *Starosta*, or head man of the village, whose duty it was to furnish horses for us, went from house to house to procure them, and they came, one by one, miserable looking animals, no bigger than ponies, until at last six were collected; and then the ceremony of arranging where each was to go, and of putting them to, occupied no small time.

In travelling in Russia, the traces, which are ropes, belong to the carriage and not to the harness of the horses. The collars have a leather loop on each side to which the traces are tied, and the *istvostchiks* are very particular in seeing that they are of the proper length, and in placing the horses as close as possible to their work, and in the early part of a stage one usually has a stoppage or two to adjust a trace or a pole piece, which does not exactly please the fastidious eye of the *istvostchik*. On this occasion we were rather more than the usual time in putting to the horses, and we had rather more than the average number of stoppages in the course of the first three versts after we had started: but this was not wonderful with a team of six peasants' horses, no two of which, in all probability, had ever been in harness

together before, and some of which appeared at first inclined strongly to object to their new occupation. There seemed, however, to be a mutual understanding between the peasants who drove us and their beasts; whether the latter were stimulated by the hopes of a feed of corn if they behaved well, as were their masters by the prospect of a *navodka* or drink-money, I do not know; but after a short time we all got on exceedingly well together, and were driven, as had been the case, every where, quite as fast as seemed possible, and much faster than I could have expected considering the nature of the road: we were well shaken and jolted about, but no accident happened.

During the whole course of the journey we seldom had a postillion who was luxurious enough to use a saddle; they generally had a bag or a mat thrown across the horse instead. Sometimes they had a rope hanging down on each side with a loop, into which they put their feet by way of stirrups; very often, however, even this rude accommodation was wanting.

The great pace at which the Russians generally go when the road is good, is very dangerous for the postillion, since, if his horse falls, the wheels cannot be stopped in time, and he is run over and probably killed. Such accidents are not uncommon on the great roads. It is astonishing how well the *istvos-tchiks* drive four horses abreast through the bad

roads, wearing gloves like those of an English hedger, made without fingers, and holding three reins in each hand. There is no country where a little extra drink-money will do so much as here; though the *istvos-tchik* is frequently the owner of the horses which he drives, he appears to care more for the *vosseim grievnik* or eightpenny piece, which he gets as *navodka*, than for the roubles which he receives for the hire of his horses. *Navodka* means literally *for a dram*, but it is now coming into fashion among the more refined *istvostchiks* to beg instead a *nachai*, or tea money. They are very good-humoured fellows, and generally when they come to be paid, put on what they evidently consider a most insinuating tone and manner: they come to the carriage door, pull off their hats, and make a low bow; they then shake back their long hair, which this performance has brought into their eyes, and say *navodka batushka*, or *nachai*, as the case may be, in their most persuasive tone. *Batushka* is a sort of endearing and at the same time respectful address, which is commonly used to superiors, as *brat* or brother is to equals and inferiors; it signifies literally *little father*. When they receive their money they generally look satisfied, while at the same time they often think a little more may be had for the asking, and they remark with an insinuating smile, that they have driven very well; and if a small coin is, on this plea, added to their *navodka*, they retire highly delighted with a profusion of thanks and bows. One

man in the middle of our journey amused us much by turning round to M—, after he had received the usual drink-money, and saying “ Ah Marie Alexandrovna, I’m sure you’ll give me a good navodka, for I know your father, and your uncles, and all the family.” He had probably found out who we were from the courier, or perhaps our servant; at all events, I believe he gained his point.

All the way, after we entered the government of Yaroslav, we remarked that the road was lined on each side by a double row of birch-trees, and I now find that all the public roads in the government are ornamented in the same manner.

We arrived here on the 16th of September, at about two o’clock in the morning: a servant soon made his appearance and conducted us to a very comfortable set of rooms which were prepared for our reception, and which, besides being in other respects very handsomely furnished, boast the unusual luxury of having their floors entirely covered with carpet. We got some tea, and of course went to bed as soon as possible, though not without having admired the moonlight view from our windows over the Volga, which here is a splendid stream about seven hundred yards wide.

This house, which was originally built as a palace for a member of the Imperial family, forms a very splendid residence for the Governor, and the situation is exceedingly fine, as the town lies at the

back, while the windows in front look upon a terrace at the foot of which flows the Volga. The terrace, which stands at a great height above the water, extends for more than a mile, commanding a fine view of the river and the country beyond. A very considerable trade is carried on in the town, which is large, handsome, and flourishing; the shops are exceedingly well supplied with goods, and many of the merchants, I am told, are very rich. Yaroslav contains twenty-eight thousand inhabitants, and forty-three or forty-four churches. Besides the terrace above the Volga, there is a handsome boulevard, and also a public garden. There are a number of large and elegant houses in the town, which in the winter are inhabited by gentlemen's families, so that the society is very good.

On the Sunday, two days after our arrival, we attended the performance of mass at the military church, by the invitation of the commanding officer, Colonel Goulaivitch, a fine soldier-like man, who, as well as his lady, has shown us great attention and civility since we have been here, and both of whom we have been fortunate enough to meet almost daily. The church was entirely filled with soldiers, and the effect produced by so many voices chanting in unison the hymns and responses was exceedingly fine.

This regiment is a military institution which has been established here about two years, for the purpose of educating and training up soldiers' sons; the

object being to provide a supply of intelligent well taught non-commissioned officers for the army. The regiment is composed of three battalions, each more than a thousand strong. The first battalion consists of little boys up to the age of about fifteen; the second, of lads from fifteen to seventeen or eighteen, and the third is effective; in the whole corps, however, there is hardly a soldier more than twenty years old.

After the conclusion of the service, the men were paraded before the Governor, and on this occasion I heard for the first time the singular salutation of the Russian soldiers to their inspecting officer. Each company as it marches past, shouts, at a given signal, as if with one voice, and very quick, "*Sdrasti Souda!*" good-day, sir. I am not sure as to the exact words, but that is their meaning, and the effect of the crash with which the salute is given is very striking. After the parade, the Colonel took us all over the barracks, which are airy and well organized; every thing seemed in excellent order, and the dormitories and other apartments clean and well ventilated. The boys are well instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic; they also learn drawing and various branches of professional knowledge, and they are all taught some trade. Nearly every part of the soldiers' equipments is made at home, including the patent leather for their belts, which seemed to be of very good quality. Even carriage and portrait-painting were among the arts practised by the sol-



diers : we were shown the portraits of the Emperor, the Colonel, and most of the officers, very creditably executed by one of them.

After making the tour of the establishment, we went to see the boys sit down to dinner. They first sung a hymn standing in their places, and when they had finished, the blast of a bugle gave the signal for them to be seated ; they seemed exceedingly comfortable, and every thing looked very clean ; a certain number acted as waiters to the rest, a service which they all take in turn. In the middle of the room on an elevated platform was a small unoccupied table, at which the Colonel told us that offenders were made to dine as a punishment. I have since seen the military hospital, which was very clean and seemed well conducted. On the ground-floor is the dispensary and surgeon's room, the patients being all up stairs ; at the head of each patient's bed is a board, on which is inscribed his name and the nature of his complaint, and behind the board is placed a paper in which the medical man in attendance is required to insert a daily register of the symptoms, treatment, &c. of the patient ; so that the Inspector of the hospital, on making his rounds, may at all times be able to judge whether proper skill has been exercised, and due attention paid by the subordinates.

Colonel Goulaivitch invited us the other day to his house, to witness the taking the oaths of alle-



giance and fidelity to the Emperor by a young officer on entering the service. The colours of the regiment were displayed in the dining-room, and under them were placed on a table a large bible and a cross. A priest was in attendance in his robes, and there were also about a dozen cantonists, as the young soldiers are called, who were to officiate as choristers upon this occasion. The officer repeated after the priest a long oath, holding in his right hand a corner of the colours; he then knelt down and kissed the bible and the cross, and the ceremony was concluded by a hymn sung by the cantonists.

I went about a fortnight ago with General Poltoratzky to a horse-fair at a large straggling village two or three-and-twenty miles hence. There were a good many horses shown, but few fine animals; they were, however, very cheap. The general bought one as a carriage-horse for three hundred roubles, (about twelve pounds) which would have been worth forty or fifty in England, as he was a handsome well-sized horse, sound, and only five years old. The scene was amusing enough, and as unlike an English fair as can be imagined. There were a good many gentlemen present, most of them in undress uniforms, and many with crosses at their button-holes. We walked through a refreshment-booth filled with peasants and horse-dealers, and found them all as quiet as possible, and, with hardly an exception, drinking tea. These people do not put sugar into

their cups in the ordinary way, but they either hold a lump between their teeth and sip the tea through it, or else they hold it in the left hand, and nibble off a little bit every now and then, as they drink their tea.

We were not destined this day to suffer from hunger; first of all, when we were in the midst of the fair, two or three large water-melons were brought, and we all sat down to eat them on the spot, some on the grass and others on the shafts of a waggon, while his excellency the Governor compromised his dignity by sitting in the middle on a reversed tub. Shortly afterwards we were summoned to a luncheon, which abounded in champagne and good things of all kinds, and which might well have passed for a dinner. This entertainment was given by the great man of the village, namely, the steward of the proprietor, who was himself an absentee. The luncheon was no sooner over, than we set off for a country house which lay on our road home, and where I found that we, and most of the gentlemen whom we had met with, were engaged to dine.

I confess this was a pleasure I could have dispensed with, having dined already, as I supposed; however, the offered hospitality was not to be declined, and we arrived at the house a party of more than twenty, evidently in stronger force than our entertainer had anticipated in the morning; for, although it was dinner-time when we reached the

house, and the cloth was already laid, we waited full two hours before we sat down to table.

Our host did his best to amuse us; and to kill time we were led about to see hemp beaten, flax spun, and potatoes dug up in what appeared to me a very ordinary manner, but according to what the owner of the place appeared to consider a very new way; in short, we were lionized over all the usual details, agricultural and manufactural, of a Russian country place; for there is hardly a landed proprietor who does not carry on a manufacture of some kind or other. At last, the dinner, which was an exceedingly good one, and which we were all the better able to appreciate from the long delay, was announced, and immediately after it we set off, and reached home before nine o'clock.

We have now a sharp frost, and two days ago (the 1st of October) were reminded of the approach of winter, on getting up in the morning, by finding the roofs of the houses around white with snow. We however are armed against the cold, as we have provided ourselves, since we came here, with furs and warm clothing for the winter. The shops, as I have already said, are well supplied, especially with furs: but it is by no means agreeable, on a cold day, to make purchases which require a little time in selecting: for, according to the old Russian custom, the shops have no stoves or fire-places. They are not situated here as in most countries, at the residence of

the tradesman to whom they belong, but are all collected together in a sort of bazaar, a large building consisting of warehouses with shops in front, and no fire is allowed in it for fear of accidents. The tradesman spends the day in his shop, and only goes home at night. When it is cold he wraps himself up in fur, and keeps himself warm by drinking enormous quantities of hot tea, which is retailed in the streets to them and to the droschka drivers who stand for hire, by people who are constantly going about with a portable semavar or urn, kept hot by charcoal, and with cups fixed in a belt and strapped round their waists. The bazaar or collection of shops in all Russian towns is called the *Gastinæ Dvor*, which signifies, I believe, *Public Court*.

Every Sunday morning, and every fête-day, the Governor holds a sort of levee; that is to say a crowd of official persons in full uniform assemble before breakfast to pay their respects: and twice a-week his lady is at home to all the people who are inclined to spend the evening, and a large society is generally assembled to play cards and sup. Besides this, we have had dinner parties two or three times a week, and the party living in the house is considerable in itself. This, however, is not the gay season at Yaroslav, as most of the families who compose the society in the winter are still absent at their country houses. The establishment in this house is large even in Russia, especially for a town, but it would be consi-

dered enormous, in most cases, in England: here, however, assessed taxes are unheard of. In the house about a hundred people are maintained; and upwards of thirty horses, chiefly for harness, are kept in condition in the stables.

The Russians appear to be extremely devoted to card-playing, which they carry on on Sunday as much as any other day. I am not speaking here of gambling, which, however, I fear, is lamentably prevalent, but of the practice in ordinary society, where whist is the usual game. They sit down before dinner, which is usually at three or four o'clock, and when it is announced, they leave their cards on the table, and resume their game the moment they return from the dining-room, continuing to play from that time till the party disperses; so that excepting for those who are no card-players, there really is no conversation. I observe every where a custom which is exceedingly slovenly, namely, that of marking the state of the game by scoring it in chalk upon the table-cloth, instead of using counters. Pieces of chalk, and brushes for erasing the figures, are always put on the table with the cards.

I will conclude my letter by a few remarks on the subject of Russian rank and title, which do not go together as in England. The Russians have but two titles of honour,—that of *knaize*, prince or duke, and *graf*, count. There are also *barons*, but they are not originally of Russian extraction, but German, usually

from Courland and Livonia. All these titles multiply themselves ad infinitum,\* being enjoyed equally by every descendant of the possessor, in the male line, without any distinction in favour of the eldest branch: they are, therefore, of little value, except as procuring, perhaps, a slight degree of consideration in society, especially in the eyes of foreigners. All rank, privilege, or precedence in Russia is either military, or is measured by a military grade. A prince who is an ensign must give way to the son of a shopkeeper who is a lieutenant, and the daughter of an untitled general will walk before a princess whose father is only colonel.† Though, however, titles are of no account, nobility confers great privileges: none but a noble can possess serfs, without which landed property in this country is of little value. The nobles are free from the conscription, which presses heavily on all other classes. They are in no case liable to the knout and other corporeal punishments; and they can always claim to enter

\* As an instance of this, I may observe that of the name of *Galitzin* only, there are, at present, no less than three hundred princes: how many princesses there may be I do not know, but they, of course, are very numerous.

† There is, however, a title of Prince which is conferred rarely, and only for long or distinguished services, and which is therefore highly valuable. The Prince Volchonsky, Field-marshal Count Paskewitch, Prince of Warsaw; and the Prince of Italy, Count Souvaroff, are noblemen holding this rank. Princes of this class have the style of highness, and the title, I believe, descends only to the eldest son and his heirs male; at all events, it does not pass to all the descendants, like other Russian titles.

the service, at the least, as under-officers, and to receive a commission, or to attain an equivalent rank as civilians, at the farthest, in three years, excepting in cases of misconduct. I should add, that being noble in Russia corresponds to the being a gentleman in England; although the Russian assumes the coronet and full-faced helmet with closed visor, instead of the simple crest and side-faced helmet of the untitled English gentleman. He does not, however, use supporters to his arms, unless they have been specially granted to his family. Nobility is earned by service or acquired by inheritance: every one who serves the Emperor, either in a civil or military capacity with the rank of officer, is noble, and may, therefore, wear a coronet on his seal or carriage, even if he is by birth bourgeois or peasant: unless, however, he was noble by birth, his nobility does not descend to his children, until he has reached, at least, the grade of major; after this, his family is placed in the position of hereditary noblesse.

A census is taken at certain intervals, and if, during a period amounting to two or three generations, any family from father to son have failed to enter the service of the crown, they lose their nobility, are erased from the list, and reduced to the class of ordinary peasants. Excepting the clergy, who are a class apart, the members of all branches of the liberal professions are, as I have already told you,



considered as “in the service;” and each individual is classed with entire reference to military rank. One civilian has the grade of ensign, another of lieutenant, and so on, up to full general. From the rank of major-general upwards, all persons, with their wives and daughters, so long as the latter remain unmarried, have the style of Excellency. Their sons, of course, enjoy no rank but what they have themselves attained in the service. A general’s daughter ranks with a colonel’s wife: but a lady, on marrying, loses whatever title or precedence she may have held by right of birth, or by an office at court, such as that of maid of honour, and can only assume that of her husband. Less fortunate than our honourable and right honourable young ladies, who retain their rank or title after marriage, the Russian general’s daughter is no longer Her Excellency, when she has become the captain’s wife, and Mademoiselle la Princesse must descend to plain Madame, if she weds an untitled husband.



## LETTER VII.

Exhibition of fire-engines—Fire establishments in the hands of Government—Account of the system—Village regulations—Frequent occurrence of rural fires—Visit to a monastery—Ex-archbishop—A Te Deum—Convent treasures—Origin of the use of images in the Greek church—Visit to Riepinsk—Going to bed—Mayor of Riepinsk—Towing barge—Project of establishing steam on the Volga—A name's day—Performance of mass by the archbishop—Mode of communicating the death of the Emperor Alexander to his mother—Treasures of the monastery at Yaroslav—Remarks on Russian churches—Conclusion of visit at Yaroslav—Post-horse system—Feldt jägers.

*Yaroslav, October 4th, 1837.*

WE were much interested, a few days ago, by a little impromptu exhibition, which displayed the efficiency of the fire-establishment, and the alertness of the men: before, however, commencing any description of what we saw, I must give you a short account of the Russian system.

The fire establishments here are not, as in England, in the hands of insurance companies, but under the immediate control of government. The firemen are soldiers, and the horses, engines, &c., are the property of the crown; the whole, however, appears to be well organized, and the general regulations laid

down by law, to be extremely good. In the towns watchmen are stationed day and night on the tops of high towers, which are built in various quarters, so as to command the town; at the foot of each tower is an establishment of firemen, horses, and engines, which are or ought to be always ready at a moment's notice.

As soon as the watchman on the tower discovers a fire, he rings a bell, which gives the alarm to the firemen below, while at the same time, by a telegraph, which can be used either by day or night, there being in the latter case a certain arrangement of lanterns, he points out the direction of the fire, and warns the establishments in other quarters of the town to send their assistance. As soon as the train of engines is ready, it proceeds at full speed through the streets, neither stopping nor turning aside, being preceded by a horseman, who gallops along, shouting and warning all persons to clear the way. If it is dark, the leading engine carries a bright light high up on a pole, which is easily distinguished, by its position, from the lamps of a carriage as it moves along. When a fire breaks out at St. Petersburg, it is the duty of the aide-de-camp in waiting, immediately to inform the Emperor, even if the latter is asleep in bed; if the fire is at all considerable, the Emperor always gets up and goes to it himself: in other cases the aide-de-camp is ordered to go to the spot, wait till the conclusion, and return to report what loss has been sus-

tained, and, in short, the general result of the misfortune.

In the country the regulations are very good, and it is the duty of the starosta or bailiff of every village to see that they are enforced, though they are nevertheless, in many cases, totally neglected.

In the villages, where the rules are carried into effect, every house has a small board affixed to it, on which is painted a number, and under the number is a figure of some implement useful at a fire: on one is drawn a bucket, on another an axe, on a third a ladder or a pole with a hook at the end for pulling down burning thatch and rafters. The moment a fire is discovered in the village, the inhabitant of every house is bound to appear with the implement depicted outside his door; and there are various regulations for establishing order in the operations, such as the appointing one man out of a certain number to be the captain of the gang, and to direct their proceedings.

If the rules were always properly enforced, it would not be easy in a country village to contrive better arrangements than these: since ready assistance with a proper number of all useful implements is provided in case of fire, and confusion is as far as possible avoided: it is the duty of the starosta to visit the houses from time to time, in order to see that the implement belonging to each is ready and fit for use, and even that the buckets are kept filled with water.

The necessity for such precautions is unfortunately exemplified, by the frequent occurrence of rural fires. The peasants, as I have already observed, live entirely in villages : their houses and outbuildings are almost universally constructed of wood, and covered with a loose thatch ; and, therefore, if a fire once breaks out, it spreads with inconceivable rapidity from house to house, and whole villages are sometimes thus destroyed. The period when these misfortunes are most common is in the autumn, immediately after harvest, when the peasants are drying their corn at fires made in wooden thatched buildings.

If the proprietors are careful in placing their drying houses at a safe distance from one another, and from the dwellings, and also in prohibiting the peasants from stacking the whole of their produce close around them, the worst that can ensue from an accident is the destruction of a drying house with the corn which may happen to be in it at the time : but nothing can exceed the characteristic imprudence of the Russian peasants ; the orders of their masters are disobeyed ; to save a little trouble, the whole of their produce is brought at once as near as possible to the drying-house ; a fire breaks out, and a year's provision is destroyed in an hour : the master may inflict punishment for the disobedience of his orders, but he must to a certain degree make good the loss which has been incurred, for the law requires that if, from a failure of crops or any other misfortune, the peasant is

in want, his master must supply him with the necessary provisions.

The exhibition which introduced this subject was as follows:—I was walking on the Boulevard with ~~Mary~~ and her uncle, when the latter proposed to us to see the fire-establishment, which was close by ; we readily assented, expecting merely to be shewn over the place, and to hear the system explained: as we entered the yard, however, the general made a sign to the watchman on the look-out tower, the latter touched the alarm-bell, and instantly all was in a state of activity. Men sprung out from every quarter, the engines were run out of the houses, horses were brought full trot out of the stables ready harnessed, and put to, and in the space of four minutes and a half from the original signal, fourteen vehicles, with thirty-three or thirty-four horses to them, were drawn up in a line in the yard ready to start. The machines consisted of fire engines, carriages conveying barrels full of water, ladders, and an apparatus for covering the walls and roofs of houses adjacent to the fire, with sail-cloth to protect them: the water-barrels are necessary, since there are no pipes and fire-plugs in a Russian town.

At a second signal from the Governor, the engines, &c., filed one after another out of the yard, and went slowly down the street, the men having taken their proper places upon them: at the further end of the street they turned, and came thundering back at full

gallop: some of the machines were drawn by two, and others by three horses abreast, all strong and serviceable animals. When we expressed our admiration at the rapidity and alertness shown in getting the horses and engines ready for action, the General assured us, that so far from any preparation having been made, his appearance was totally unexpected, and that the day being a fête, all the men were absent who could be spared from duty; and the truth of this was proved by the arrival of the master of police at a gallop in his droschka, he being the chief of the fire-establishment, and having just been informed that the engines were rattling through the town, though whether for actual service, or, as was the case, merely for inspection by the Governor, he did not know till he arrived on the scene of action.

A few days after this we were invited to see an exhibition of the manner of proceeding and working the engines in case of a fire: but the display on this occasion was not nearly so interesting to me, since every thing was prepared beforehand; while the activity on the former day furnished a proof of the real utility and good organization of the establishment, and of the efficiency and alertness of the men in a case of emergency. The powers of the engines, and the manner in which they were worked as displayed in this second exhibition, certainly could not be compared to the performances of London engines in the hands of London firemen; but I think that few pro-

vincial towns in England could boast of superiority in these respects over Yaroslav. Besides the engines, the chief implements to be remarked were ladders divided for the convenience of packing like the parts of a telescope, and drawn out by pulleys, so as to reach when required to a very considerable height; grappling-irons for pulling down walls; and the apparatus which I have already mentioned of sail-cloth stretched on poles, which could be hoisted up like the sails of a ship, and placed in front of a house: there were also other pieces of sail-cloth for laying over roofs. These cloths, being kept constantly wet by means of the engines, form of course a great protection to the timber walls and boarded roofs which are so common in a Russian town: the houses are easily covered, being generally low, and frequently not more than one story in elevation. In St. Petersburg, the building wooden houses is now wisely forbidden by law.

On the morning of the 21st, a gentleman, who was, like myself, on a visit here, proposed to me at breakfast to accompany him to the monastery of Tolga, about seven miles hence, where he was going to pay a visit to the ex-archbishop of Yaroslav,\* a prelate who has resigned his episcopal functions, and who now lives in retirement in the convent. We went in a light low calèche belonging to my companion

\* Every government in Russia is an episcopal or archiepiscopal See. No one but a monk can become a bishop.



with three horses abreast, or, as this is called in Russian, a *troika*. The horses had cost but five pounds each, yet we went sometimes at the rate of eighteen, and never less than fifteen miles an hour, the middle horse trotting all the time while the others galloped. A light open calèche is, in some respects, much better for Russian travelling than a close carriage, as it is less liable to upset in bad roads; and three or four horses being always sufficient to draw it no leaders are required, and, therefore, in going fast, the life of a postillion is not risked: for a long journey, however, especially with a lady, the comfort of a close carriage is very requisite.

The monastery being on the further side of the Volga, we crossed the river in a boat, and landed at the gate of the convent: the reaches of the river in both directions are here extremely fine, and the banks handsome and well wooded. We were received by the archbishop, with whom we sat some time; however, as he only spoke Russ. the conversation lay entirely between him and my companion: he was dressed in a caftan or wrapper of dark-coloured silk, with a shawl sash round his waist, and a monk's cap of black velvet on his head: the monk's cap is in the shape of a hat without a rim, and is covered by a black hood hanging down behind. A Russian, on saluting or taking leave of a priest, always kisses his hand, while the priest in return makes the sign of the cross, and blesses him. After our visit to



the ex-archbishop, we proceeded to the church, which is old and curious, the walls and roof being entirely covered with paintings of saints, &c. In the corner of the church stood a man with wax candles for sale, two or three of which my companion, who is a very devout person, bought, and having lighted them before an image, he ordered a *Te Deum*,—a short service, which was performed by three monks, and for which he paid a fee of ten roubles. During the reading of a passage from the gospel, he bent himself in an attitude of the utmost humility under the book, so that it rested on his shoulders like the globe on an Atlas, and he continued in that position till the monk had done reading: he also paid great adoration to an image of the Virgin, which was over the altar, and to which he afterwards called my attention, it being remarkable, not only from its extreme richness, being set in a broad frame of pearls, the value of which must have been very great,—but still more in the eyes of the faithful, from a miraculous account of its origin.

After the service, some of the monks took us to see the treasures of the convent, consisting of robes for the archbishop, of velvet embroidered with gold, and others of cloth of gold, with mitres to match; many of them were very handsome, and some curious from their antiquity. There were also Bibles bound with gold and decorated with jewels; and gold chalices and crosses, with other

ornaments for the church. After this display we were shown the refectory, and we immediately afterwards left the convent. The monks were an ill-favoured race with vulgar features, and not a fine or dignified countenance among them. Monks and nuns never eat meat, but they are allowed the use of eggs, butter, and milk, excepting during the fasts of the church.

As soon as we were seated in the boat to return, my companion begged me not to suppose, that when I saw him kneeling before an image, he was paying adoration to the image itself, but to that which it represented. He then told me that the Greek church grounded the use of images on the story which they receive as true, of Abgarus, King of Edessa, receiving from our Saviour a letter accompanied by his portrait, which was endowed with miraculous powers. What in the Greek church are called *images*, are sacred pictures usually in the style of the Byzantine school; statues they never use for worship.

I was afterwards told the miraculous history of the image which I had seen in the church: I only remember, however, that it had appeared by night in the midst of a burning bush, to a certain archbishop some centuries ago; that he had taken possession of it, and had afterwards been directed by dreams to build the monastery and church of Tolga, and to place it there.

The following day the General proposed to me to

go with him to an estate of his, about sixty miles hence on the Volga, near the town of Riepinsk, which he wished to visit, and after spending the night there, to return the next day. Accordingly, after an early dinner we set off, accompanied by Madame P—'s brother, Prince A. Galitzin, and a Col. S——, the General's aide-de-camp. The road was but indifferent; however, we reached our journey's end in a little more than five hours and a half, including the delay of changing horses twice, an operation which is not performed here quite as fast as at Hounslow; but a Governor travelling within the limits of his own province, is never unnecessarily detained. The house where we were to sleep, was merely the residence of the superintendent, with a couple of rooms reserved for an occasion like the present: one of these was therefore appropriated to Col. S—— and the Prince, while my host and I were to bivouac upon a couple of sofas in the sitting-room. In due time our companions took their leave, our room being constantly besieged by a variety of the people about the place, coming to speak to their master on business, and to bring in their reports, while the passage was filled with others waiting for their turn of admission. However, the General wound up his watch, pulled off his coat, and at last fairly got into bed, still continuing his audience to the crowd in waiting. The court being held with open doors, I plainly saw, from the number of people who still thronged the

passage, that if I intended to go to bed at all, I must follow the example of his Excellency, and perform the ceremony of undressing in public. As soon as I was in bed, the whole scene amused me much, and had I possessed a talent for drawing, there were abundant subjects before me for an excellent sketch: the expectant crowd in the passage pressing forward as far as they thought they could venture, with their bearded faces half in light and half in darkness, formed the back ground; while in the room there were always two or three prominent figures, conversing with their master, who reclined at his ease on the couch opposite to me smoking his pipe.

At length,

“ The chamber was cleared,  
The train disappeared,”

and a servant brought in a splendid melon, which, with a glass of wine, furnished us an excellent supper in bed; while our companions came back in their dressing-gowns, and sat talking for some time, so that it must have been late before the candles were put out, and we composed ourselves to sleep; this, however, proved a vain attempt, for the room having been for some time uninhabited, swarmed with fleas, which gave neither of us a moment's respite till near morning.

The next day, after walking about, and looking at a new house which is in progress, and which will command from the windows a magnificent view of

the Volga, we drove to the neighbouring town of Riepinsk, where a very large trade is carried on in corn and tallow. We proceeded first to the house of the mayor, who gave us an excellent luncheon, and a bottle of champagne, and who afterwards accompanied us round the town.

He was an admirable specimen of the true old-fashioned Russian tradesman; a tall portly old man, with a fine grey beard, and a long blue surtout, buttoned according to custom on the left side, and black boots drawn over his trowsers.

There was not much to see; the principal lions being the exchange, and a church which was in building, to the top of which we walked by inclined planes. The river was exceedingly full of barges, and we went on board one of the largest, which was used merely as a tow-boat to drag a loaded train. Its progress against stream must be exceedingly slow. An anchor is carried out a-head, to which the barge is warped up by means of a strong cable and a capstan turned by about two-and-twenty horses, which work below deck, as in a threshing machine: there were fifty horses on board for the purpose of relays. There is water communication all the way from Riepinsk to Petersburg, the distance being about nine hundred miles, while by land it is but three hundred and fifty. The project of steam upon the Volga is now talked of, and a company is formed to carry the scheme into effect; great doubts,

however, appear to be entertained as to the practicability and success of the undertaking. I do not understand the difficulties, but I believe they arise partly from shallows or other natural obstacles in the river, and partly from the opposition of persons interested in maintaining the present system of traffic. Were the proposal executed, the steam vessels would, I believe, run from Yaroslav to Kazan and Astracan.

After dinner we set off on our return to Yaroslav, and arrived here a little before midnight. The 29th being St. Sophia, was the name's day of Madame Poltoratzky, and during the whole morning numbers of visitors of all classes were constantly arriving to congratulate her and bring her presents; her tables were covered with china, books, embroidery, and carpet-work; while in the large ball-room were placed two or three tubs of water, containing two sturgeons, and a quantity of sterlet alive, which had been brought by some of the tradesmen of the town. The sterlet is an excellent fish peculiar to the Volga and one or two other rivers; it partakes of the migratory habits of the salmon, descending periodically into salt-water; it is not, however, the least like it in flavour or appearance.

We had a large party at dinner, including five or six bearded merchants in their long caftans; and one of the sturgeons, which appeared on the occasion, proved excellent: the day was concluded by a ball.

On Sunday we went to hear the archbishop perform

mass in the church of his convent ; the service being different from that in which an ordinary priest officiates. The archbishop was magnificently dressed in a robe of crimson velvet embroidered with gold, with the ribbons and crosses of various orders round his neck. On his head he had a mitre, also of crimson velvet covered with jewels ; the mitre is not cloven, but is a high cap with a round top bulging out. At the conclusion, he stood before the altar, while his mitre and the robes in which he had officiated were taken off by the priests in attendance ; a monk's gown, with two stars on the breast, was then put on, as well as a monk's cap ; the crosses were replaced around his neck, and the archbishop walked out of the church blessing the congregation as he went. He was a little old man, apparently much more feeble and infirm than his predecessor whom I had seen at Tolga, and who had retired owing to his age and consequent inability to perform the duties of his office. The see of Yaroslav is one of the best in Russia : I am told the revenues amount to about two thousand five hundred a-year.

Nearly the whole service in the Greek Church is chaunted, and a good deal of incense is used : the officiating priest stands during the greater part of the time with his back to the congregation ; he is always assisted by a deacon, who, whenever he gives him or receives from him a book, as often happens in the course of the ceremony, kisses his



hand. At the conclusion of mass the cross is brought forward by the priest to be kissed by the congregation. This latter ceremony was made the means of communicating to the Empress-mother the death of the late Emperor Alexander. On hearing of the illness of her son at Taganrog, the Empress ordered a mass to be celebrated for his recovery at the Kazan church of St. Petersburg. In the middle of the service the Grand Duke Nicholas was called out and informed that the tidings of his brother's death had arrived. He communicated the intelligence to the Metropolitan, who was officiating, and when the latter, at the conclusion of the service, presented as usual the cross to the Empress, it was enveloped in black crape.

On Monday we went to see the treasures of the convent where we had been at church the day before. We were taken by a monk into a strong-room, the neglected appearance of which little bespoke the riches it contained. The sides of the room were covered by miserable deal wardrobes, displaying, when opened, a great quantity of robes; some of the richest silk or velvet of various colours embroidered with gold and silver, and others of gold or silver tissue. These, however, sunk into insignificance when compared with the dresses for the use of the Archbishop on high ceremonials; these were laid up in drawers, and were embroidered with jewels instead of gold. The most beautiful was of sky-blue velvet, with a broad border and other orna-

ments of a beautiful pattern of leaves and flowers in fine pearls, of which nearly six pounds weight were employed on this suit alone. There were other robes of velvet almost equally rich, and all had mitres to match, which were absolutely covered with jewels: one mitre was valued at about five thousand pounds. There were also bibles bound in gold and covered with jewels; crosses and images set in diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones; and several handsome services for administering the sacrament. One of these was of pure gold richly and beautifully chased, of the weight of twelve pounds avoirdupoise. The riches of this convent are chiefly owing to the munificence of the ancient princes of Yaroslav, but I am told they are nothing in comparison to the treasures which are heaped up in the convent of Troitska between this place and Moscow. The late Archbishop of Yaroslav found, on his accession to the see, that there were no less than sixty-four pounds weight of fine pearls; of which no use was made, but which were laid up in bags like seeds. Being a person of taste in such matters, he, in concert with the Abbess of a neighbouring convent, employed the pearls in embroidering the beautiful robes which I have just described; they have, however, still remaining unused, about eleven pounds of pearls. Besides these things, they have in the church a shrine of great size, of solid silver; an image set in broad frame of pearls which must be of immense

value; and also many precious and costly articles which I have not enumerated; the interior of the church is almost covered with gilding.

Although the dresses of the prelates, and even of the ordinary priests, are made and ornamented so magnificently, the forms of the robes are exceedingly stiff and ungraceful. Indeed, a false and frivolous taste appears to prevail in every thing connected with ecclesiastical pomp and ceremony in this country. Immense sums of money are lavished on petty minutiae, on tawdry robes, gilt walls, and jewel-set images, which must be admired not for their beauty, but for their cost, which must be examined only in detail, and which produce no grand and general effects; while one seeks in vain for splendid cathedrals and noble architecture,\* to impress and elevate the mind with solemn feelings, and to attest the genius and grand conceptions of ancient days.

We have passed our time here so agreeably, and have received so much kindness, that we are preparing with no small regret to leave Yaroslav to-morrow. Among the other attractions of the house, must not be forgotten in the heart of Russia, a number of modern English books which we have met with, and among the rest "Blackwood's Magazine," which is regularly taken in by our hostess, who

\* My opinion on these points was unchanged on leaving Russia; but the interior of the church of the Smolna monastery, and the columns of the church of St. Isaac, at Petersburg, are evidences of a taste for a higher order of things.

understands and speaks English exceedingly well, and who occupies herself much with English literature. The kind and repeated invitations which we have received to prolong our stay, are highly agreeable and flattering, but we are obliged to shut our ears to temptation, since the season reminds us that it is time to seek our winter quarters. My next letter will be addressed to you from Moscow, which is a hundred and eighty miles hence, and where we shall spend a few days on our way southwards.

We have been advised, instead of travelling to Moscow with post-horses, to make an agreement here with a man who undertakes to forward us all the way: by which means we avoid the chance of being detained for want of horses. The expense of a *padoroshna*, which I will explain directly, is also saved, though this is but trifling.

We have accordingly agreed with an *istvostchik* to pay him a sum equivalent to about five pounds ten shillings for the whole journey, with six horses; and we have received from him a paper on which are marked the distances, and the proportion we are to pay at each station. The stages are somewhat longer than those of the regular post, but this will be no disadvantage to us, as the Russian horses possess great powers of endurance, and more time is lost in this country, by frequent changes than is gained in increase of speed.

The post horses are an important source of revenue

to government, the contractors who furnish them paying highly for the privilege. At every station there is a postmaster, an officer in the imperial service, whose duty it is to prevent unnecessary delay, and to ensure regularity in furnishing the horses, which are supplied sometimes by the proprietor of the village, but more often by peasants who make this their occupation, and who are properly called *yemstchiks*; they usually drive their horses themselves. At each post-house is a board, on which is marked the number of horses belonging to that station, which of course is, or ought to be, proportioned to the traffic on the road.

Post-horses can only be furnished to travellers on producing a *padoroshna*, or order, which it is necessary to obtain at a police-office before starting, and in which is inserted the place to which one is going, the distance in versts, and the number of horses which one requires.

For the *padoroshna* one pays at the rate of two kopeks per horse per verst, ten kopeks being equivalent to a penny; this duty serves to maintain the roads.

The fare for each post-horse is eight kopeks, between Petersburg and Moscow, and five kopeks on most other roads, per verst.

To travel post in Russia, a person must either be provided with his own carriage, or content himself with a *tilèga*, a small waggon without springs. In

these the letters are conveyed by the Post Office, and the feldt yägers, or imperial couriers, travel in the same manner. The feldt yägers are a class of officers set apart for this employment, and numbers of them are at all times traversing the empire in every direction, on various errands: the fatigues which they endure are so severe and injurious to the health, that they seldom last above six years, dying in general of consumption.

The pace they are forced to travel in waggons without springs and over the roughest roads, is from twelve to fifteen miles an hour, and this, day and night, for long distances, without any repose. They pay for the horses at every station, but they are not delayed many minutes, as every postmaster is obliged to have a *tilèga* and three horses standing at all times ready in his yard, in case a courier should arrive, and the moment it goes out, another takes its place. The courier has only to show his *padoroshna*, and the *tilèga* is driven out for him directly, the time at which he reaches and leaves each station being marked by the postmaster on the *padoroshna*. The feldt yägers travel sometimes from Moscow to Petersburg, a distance of more than five hundred and twenty miles, in less than five and thirty hours.

## LETTER VIII.

Journey to Moscow—Bad roads—River Medveditza—Origin of its name—Arrival at Moscow—The Kremlin—Condition of the city—Ivan Veliki—The imperial palace—Ancient apartments of the Russian princesses—The great bell—The holy gate—The Exercise House—Intention of proceeding southwards.

*Moscow, October 10th, 1837.*

WE arrived here late last Friday night, after a journey from Yaroslav, which the state of the roads rendered extremely fatiguing and disagreeable. A new line of road is in progress, but is not yet completed, and the old road is in the meantime utterly neglected. We started on Thursday morning in a hard frost, which still continues, but which had been preceded by very heavy rain; during the wet weather the mud had become very deep, and had been much cut up by wheels, while it was now as hard as stone, and rougher than any ploughed field, so that in many places it was difficult to find a practicable track for the carriage. Occasionally the two wheels on one side would break through the crust of ice, and plunge into a hole so



deep, that I thought it impossible we could recover our equilibrium, and I hardly thought we could get here without being upset. However, no accident occurred, thanks to the skill and care of the *istvostchiks*, who now and then left the high road for several *versts* at a time, and drove us along mere tracks through fields and woods. In one of the latter, the path being somewhat narrow, a young birch-tree, of about the thickness of a man's leg, got caught between the wheel and the body of the carriage, and was brought to the ground with a crash; no harm, however, was done, though I was rather alarmed at first by the idea that the carriage itself, and not the tree had suffered.

The road, on leaving Yaroslav, lay, for nearly a mile along a causeway, twenty or thirty feet high, across a low flat. A small river, called the *Medveditza*, flows here into the Volga; and, until the causeway was made, all communication was cut off between the two sides, except with boats, at the period of the annual floods; for, when the snow melts, and the ice breaks up, the rivers overflow to a great height, and cover the low ground. The *Medveditza* was so named by an ancient Prince, in commemoration of his having killed a bear single-handed, at the spot where it joins the Volga; *medved*, in Russian, signifying a bear. The arms of the province and town appear to commemorate the same event, since they consist of a bear carrying a battle-axe. Be-

tween Yaroslav and Moscow the country is much finer than any part of Russia I have yet seen.

About a hundred versts hence we passed a wood of tolerably large oak trees, but we met with no oaks afterwards. We reached a town half-way, called Periaslav, about half-past nine at night; and as we could not travel in the dark, in consequence of the state of the road, we remained there till day-light, sleeping upon a sofa and some chairs, wrapped up in our cloaks; for, although we got a warm and clean room in the inn, beds were a luxury not to be met with, most Russian travellers, as I have already told you, carrying their own with them.

We were in the carriage again by five o'clock the next morning; but, from the state of the road, we did not reach the gates of Moscow till half-past twelve at night. Here my passport was shown, and we were immediately admitted, and found ourselves, with no small degree of satisfaction, traversing the streets of the ancient city, which were dimly lighted and empty, and through which we drove for more than an hour before we reached our journey's end. We are lodged in my father-in-law's house, which is empty and dismantled, the family being in the country; however, we make ourselves tolerably comfortable during our short stay, and we spend, as you may suppose, most of our time abroad.

M—— has, fortunately, a married sister living

here, who, with her husband, has been very kind in going about with us to see the sights, and to act as interpreter.

The first step to take on the morning after our arrival, was to engage a carriage, and we have a very neat and comfortable chariot with four horses, for about thirteen shillings a day. It arrives at whatever time we order in the morning, and remains at our disposal till we come home, as late as we please at night, standing whenever we are not using it, in the court-yard; the horses being fed when necessary with nose-bags, but never entering a stable, or being taken off the carriage all day.

We went first to visit the relations whom I have mentioned, who live at some distance on the further side of the river Moskva. I was not aware that we should pass near the Kremlin on our way, and the view of it, which burst upon us unexpectedly, on reaching the bridge, was, by far, the most striking thing of the kind I ever saw. The Kremlin stands in the middle of the city on an elevation, the base of which is circled by white Tartar walls, and washed on one side by the river. The mount itself is covered by most picturesque buildings of various forms, churches, arsenals, palaces, and towers; while upwards of thirty gilt cupolas of various sizes, and at various heights, shoot up, and stand in relief against the sky, giving an oriental appearance to the scene, which, on my first introduction to it was not a little enhanced

in beauty by the clear blue sky, and the bright hue which shone on the water and on the gilded roofs.

The following day being Sunday we attended service in the English church, which is plain but neatly fitted up; the congregation was small and scanty; however the attendance is, no doubt, better in winter when the town is full. In the afternoon we went to dine with an aunt of M——'s, who lived at the very further side of the town, so that the drive served to give me a very fair idea of the extent of Moscow; it was, in fact, a complete journey to the lady's house, which, though within the gates, was almost in the country, since there were three or four acres of land attached to it. On the outskirts of the city may still be seen a few ruined houses, which have never been rebuilt since the French invasion. In general, however, Moscow exhibits no signs of the devastation which then took place, though the scattered manner in which it is built, and the number of fine houses, which are no longer inhabited, or kept up by their possessors, give a certain air of desertion to the town, and impress one with the feeling that its glory is departed. The ancient glory of Moscow has, indeed, taken wings for Petersburg; but it is said, that although yearly more and more deserted by the courtly and fashionable, it is gradually rising into increased prosperity as a commercial and manufacturing town.

We have driven in various directions about the

streets, have visited the boulevards, which are numerous, and much handsomer than anything of the kind at Petersburg, and have made a few purchases in the fashionable shops of the Pont des Marechaux, or Blacksmith's Bridge, as the Regent-street of Moscow is somewhat uncouthly named. Our chief attention, however, as you may suppose, has been devoted to the Kremlin. The view from the terrace, where the troops are paraded in front of the imperial palace, is most beautiful and striking; the river, which though small, is highly ornamental, lies immediately beneath, and the city is stretched out under the gazer's feet; but on the highest spot of ground in the Kremlin stands a lofty slender tower, which rises high above any other point in the city. This pillar-like edifice is called Ivan Veliki, or Long John; and from its top, to which we ascended by a time-worn winding stair, we had a most magnificent panoramic view of Moscow, and the country around for many miles on every side. The sky was cloudless, the keen frosty air was bright and clear, and there was no smoke to obstruct the view. I need not describe the arsenal, which contains arms for a hundred and forty thousand foot-soldiers, and eighty thousand cavalry, all arranged in excellent order; nor the cannon, some of enormous size, which have, at different periods, been taken in action, and are arranged in the square outside the arsenal.

The imperial palace contains a fine room, of sin-

gular form, richly decorated, and hung with crimson velvet, studded with the imperial eagle, and the cypher of Nicolas the First, in gold. There is a throne in the room, and here the Emperor receives the congratulations of his subjects and the foreign ambassadors, immediately after his coronation, which takes place in the cathedral church, a small ancient building close by. A small set of apartments, which, in former days formed the abode and the prison of the grand duchesses for the time being, are curious, as showing how the Russian princesses were lodged. These apartments consist of three or four small rooms, the windows of which are formed of small panes of coloured glass, affording no view but that of an old church opposite. The furniture is rich, but scanty and comfortless, and the apartments have been recently fresh painted and gilt, and all the old ornaments and decorations restored without any alteration or addition. In this small and cheerless dwelling were the daughters of the Czar, whether few or many, brought up and immured in ancient times, never being allowed to go forth until the day of their marriage.

The remainder of the palace is in no way remarkable, either as curious or splendid; but the prospect from the windows is magnificent, standing, as the palace does on the elevated ground of the Kremlin, and raised above the town; and, perhaps, no sovereign in Europe has so fine a site as this for a resi-

dence in his capital. A new and magnificent palace has been determined on, and its erection will, I am told, be shortly commenced. I must not forget the "great bell of Moscow," which can now be seen to much advantage. It was cast in the year 1733; but soon after it was hung, it fell and buried itself in the ground. In this state it remained until the year 1836, when, by orders of the Emperor, it was with some difficulty raised, and placed upon a circular wall about four feet high, on which it now stands. An iron gate in the wall enables one to see the interior of the bell, the diameter of which within is about fourteen feet—its weight is upwards of a hundred and eighty tons. A piece, which is now placed by it, was broken out of the bell in its fall; this fracture enables one to see the thickness of the metal, which is about half a yard.

There is a bell now hanging in the Kremlin, which weighs between ninety and a hundred tons; it is rung twelve times a year, and it takes three men to move the clapper for the purpose; the bell itself, as is always the case in Russia, being fixed, and the clapper alone moveable. There is, probably, no country in the world where there are so many fine bells; or where there is so much ringing as in this; but the Russians have no idea of a harmonious peal, and their style of ringing is as annoying to the ears, and as discordant as possible.

One of the gates of the Kremlin is called the Holy



Gate, and while passing through, it is necessary to take off the hat. Near here is a circular stone platform, surrounded by a low parapet, where criminals were formerly executed.

The most ancient portion of Moscow, is called the White City, and is surrounded by a wall, at one of the gates of which is placed a celebrated image of the Virgin, covered with diamonds and other jewels of great value. This image, which is endowed according to popular belief with miraculous virtues, is often carried to sick persons in their houses, and there is a copy with paste diamonds and false jewels, which does duty at home during the absence of the original, and which is found, we may presume, to be equally efficacious.

Near the Holy Gate of the Kremlin, stands the church of Saint Basil, an ancient building, remarkable, not only for the singularity of its architecture and its spiral ornaments, but also for the fate of the architect, whose eyes were put out, as soon as he had completed the work, by his master, John the Cruel, in order that he might never build anything else like it.

One of the most remarkable modern buildings in Moscow, is the Exercise-House, a magnificent room, in which troops of all arms are drilled and manœuvred in winter. Eight thousand men can, I am told, be exercised in it at once. The floor is covered with fine gravel, and the room is effectually warmed by means of stoves at the corners and sides. Its

dimensions are about five hundred and sixty feet by a hundred and forty-five, with a proportionable height, and the roof is ingeniously supported without the aid of pillars. I was not so much struck by the immense size of this gigantic room on first entering, as when afterwards on casting my eyes around I saw here and there carts bringing in fresh gravel or water for laying the dust, which called my attention to the enormous proportions of the building in which they were employed.

I should have observed that when we visited the palace, the servants who showed us over it, refused to take any money for their trouble, alleging that they were strictly forbidden to do so.

To-morrow we start for Tamboff, about three hundred and eighty miles to the south, where, as you know, we intend to pass the winter with M—'s eldest brother. He has sent his carriage for us, with a trusty servant well accustomed to travelling, whom we shall doubtless find highly useful upon the road. On a long Russian journey two servants are very desirable, one to relieve the other; or on arriving at a station, one to busy himself in getting fresh horses, while the other is in attendance on the travellers.

Our passport is in due order, our padoroshna is procured, and the weather promises to be extremely favourable : a matter of no small importance, as I am told that after heavy rains, the road we have to

traverse is almost impassable in some places, from the depth of mud. There are large tracts of land near Tamboff, in which not a stone is to be found, and where no materials therefore for roads can be procured. I shall write again soon after we get to our journey's end, and as we shall after this remain stationary for some time, I shall probably take the opportunity now and then of sending you some general accounts of the country and the people, in default of any adventures of our own.

## LETTER IX.

Russian autumn—Journey from Moscow to Tamboff—Accident on the road—Eclipse of the moon—A coach and nine—Character of the country near Tamboff—Game—Difference between a country life in Russia and in England—Scarcity of books—Censorship—Want of country amusements—Want of independence—Law of inheritance—Relative position of master and serf—Description of a country place—Furniture and interior arrangements—Nature of property—Management of peasants—Their character and habits—Fasts—Manufactories established by landed proprietors—Versatility of the Russians—Apprenticing children—Household industry.

*Rascazava, near Tamboff, October 27th, 1837.*

ALTHOUGH according to the calendar it is but autumn, and you in England may be still enjoying warm days, I confess I feel here much inclined to believe it is winter, at the same time that I allow it to be a winter by no means disagreeable. While we were at Moscow, we had ten degrees of frost by Reaumur, and since we came here, we have had some days almost equally cold. This temperature has, however, been generally compensated by a bright sun, and I am in no way disposed to complain of the season. The Russians will not allow that winter has begun,

however cold it may be, until the snow has fallen and sledging has commenced.

We left Moscow, according to our intentions, on Wednesday, the 11th of this month, in the afternoon, and travelling day and night without stopping, we arrived at this house on the Saturday at the same hour, having been exactly three days on the road. Here M—— and I met with a most warm reception from her brother and his wife, who are exceedingly kind, and with whom we spend our time most comfortably and pleasantly. In the course of the first stage from Moscow, we met with an accident which at first looked rather formidable, though in the end no one was hurt, and we were soon enabled to proceed.

The road had been for some time sandy and heavy, so that we had gone at a gentle pace, till in a long straggling village, about twelve miles from Moscow, we suddenly increased our speed, and presently found ourselves driving along at full gallop; we had not, however, proceeded far in this manner, before the carriage was stopped with a jerk, and we at the same time heard a violent cracking of wood. The door of the carriage was instantly opened, and we got out, when we beheld a very curious scene. On one side was a tilèga half upset, with a man and a woman thrown out of it into a ditch, but happily unhurt; and the horses which drew it, struggling sometimes up and sometimes down, entangled in their harness.

Our six horses, moreover, were lying on the ground in a heap. The near wheeler (of four) was struggling with his hind quarters under the carriage, between the fore and hind wheels; another of the wheelers was on his back, with his heels up in the air, and fast in the rope-traces; the two others were in different positions, and the leaders, strange to say, undermost, with their heads turned the contrary way to that in which we were going. The postillion's horse was lying stretched on his side unable to move, with his head and shoulders under the fore-axle, which being low pressed upon him, and his companion was in nearly the same position: the pole was snapped across in the middle. The peasant in the tilèga was drunk, and had caused this catastrophe by driving against us or our horses: the shock, which, as we were going at full gallop was very great, threw down the leaders; the wheelers then fell over them, the horses all getting entangled in the rope harness; and the carriage was stopped by running on the horses. How the leaders in falling got their heads turned round where their tails had been I cannot explain; such however was the fact.

Our first inquiries naturally were as to the fate of the postillion, and great was our satisfaction at finding, though he must have fallen with his horse, that he had contrived to roll himself immediately out of the way, and had escaped completely unhurt. If he had not got clear of the other horses, and of the carriage,

he must inevitably have been crushed to death; and his escape was most wonderful.

At the first appearance of affairs, I thought that some of the horses must be disabled, and that our broken pole would at any rate be the cause of a long delay. However, a number of people assembled, and without cutting a single rope or strap, they succeeded in about half an hour in releasing all the horses; none of which, when we saw them on their legs, appeared to be seriously hurt, although the road, on which they had fallen, must have been tolerably hard from the frost, which had now lasted more than a week.

The next consideration was the broken pole, but with the handiness and ready contrivance which seem innate to this people, our Russian attendant proceeded to splice the two pieces together with a rope and a piece of wood, and though the operation did not last five minutes, the repair was so well and effectually done, that the pole, which was never meddled with again till we reached our journey's end, was then as firm as ever; and we might have travelled with it in that state back again to Moscow.

In about three quarters of an hour from the moment of the stoppage, we were enabled to proceed, and we met with no further adventures in the course of the journey. Early the following morning, we reached the town of Columna, about eighty miles



from Moscow : and passing through one or two small towns in the course of the day, we got to Riazan, a considerable place and the capital of a government, by seven in the evening ; we proceeded, as I have already said, without resting, and on the Friday night, drank tea at Kazloff, and reached the town of Tamboff, about three and twenty miles hence, to breakfast the following morning. The road, most part of the way, was tolerable, as the weather was dry ; it was in general enormously wide, and being unstoned resembled a rough ploughed field, through which the narrow-beaten track meandered like a foot-path.

The country was little wooded after the first half of our journey, but from Kazloff to Tamboff, a distance of fifty miles, it was entirely open, and in fact little but a steppe.

The moon, the night that we traversed this district, was at the full, but about eleven o'clock it began, to our great surprise, to fail us, and at length the darkness became so great that our yemstchik stopped, declaring that he could not see his horses, much less the road, which, he it observed, is very easily lost in these unenclosed plains. With some lucifer-matches which we had in the carriage we lighted one of the lamps, the other being useless, owing to a broken glass ; and the servant on the box was obliged to hold the light in his hand, and occasionally to walk with it before the horses ; by which means we

managed to creep along at a foot's pace till about two o'clock in the morning, when the moon began to re-appear.

Two or three days ago I was looking at an almanac, and I perceived that, although on this occasion we had selected the period of a full moon for our journey, we had unwittingly fallen on the night of a total eclipse. In travelling over Russian roads, moonshine becomes a matter of considerable importance.

On reaching the town of Tamboff, I was told that the road to this place was so heavy, that it would be necessary to put extra horses to the carriage. To this I of course assented, and when we got into the vehicle again, we found no less than nine horses tackled to it; six wheelers abreast, driven from the box, (which by-the-bye is contrary to law) and three leaders with a postillion mounted in the middle. This drove of animals, however, we found by no means superfluous, for the road lay almost all the way through a heavy sand, so deep that the horses sunk in it to the fetlocks, and the fellies of the wheels were covered.

The general character of this part of the country is open plain or steppe, unclothed by trees; immediately around this spot, however, are very extensive woods of oak and Scotch fir. The former is mere copse and brushwood, but much of the fir timber is large and fine. The soil, where not covered by sand,

consists in general of a rich deep black mould, entirely free from stone, and producing heavy crops without manure.\*

The woods near here abound in hares, foxes, wolves, and black cock. Snipes, double-snipes, and woodcocks are very plentiful in the summer, but they have now taken flight, and there are none left. The cock of the woods is also found here, and the other day when we were shooting, we surprised an eagle eating a hare; the bird, however, escaped unhurt, though a shot was fired at him. The neighbouring plains supply gelinottes and red-legged partridges, so that there is no lack of game. Rabbits do not exist in Russia, unless it is in the extreme southern provinces, where they perhaps may be found. Donkeys also by-the-bye, are unknown, or at least extremely rare.

We are to spend the winter in the town of Tamboff, and we are going there in a few days for a week, to see a large fair of horses and goods of every kind, which is held annually at this season.

At present having I think told you of all that relates to ourselves, I shall fill up my paper with a few general remarks on a Russian country life; and I must begin by reminding you how different the

\* In Tamboff I afterwards saw all the manure of the town brought in the course of the winter, and piled on the ice of the river, in order that it might be carried away by the spring-floods!

Russian's ideas in this respect are from an Englishman's.

Of the former, few, if they can avoid it, spend the winter in the country, for to be there when the ground is covered with snow, and all out-door occupations and amusements fail, implies absolute banishment from the civilized world; and society, which then becomes doubly requisite, is a pleasure out of the question; and though to some the want of this enjoyment may perhaps be supplied by books, yet in general the Russians are not a literary people, and those who have an appetite for reading, have but little food to gratify it, especially at a distance from Petersburg. Russian literature is, I am assured, daily improving; but still it is admitted on all hands that he would be sadly deficient who depended entirely upon it for information. Although, however, this want is supplied by the universal knowledge of French, and a very general acquaintance with the German, and even to a certain extent with the English language, yet books are dear, and there are none of the arrangements which in England bring them more or less within the reach of all who are sufficiently educated to profit by them.

The censorship, moreover, presses with a dead weight upon literature, by the number of publications which it prohibits; many of which are those which would tend most to open the minds of the people, but which the government naturally dreads lest they

should thereby learn to think too much for themselves. Newspapers, though not numerous, are seen in every house; but all political speculations, all remarks on acts of the government, all discussions as to the qualifications of public officers, or as to the results and tendencies of public events, being prohibited; while a great deal of information as to what is actually passing in the world is suppressed; these papers contain little beyond a statement of facts as far as this is permitted, a notification of officers who have received decorations, promotions or appointments; an imperial *ukase* or ordonnance, and an account of the movements of the Emperor or Empress.

It is not surprising then, that a taste for reading should, in ordinary cases, be checked, where the field of literature is so confined, and where all the subjects of most general and exciting interest are so carefully excluded from discussion.

However, without taking the subject of this long digression into consideration, solitude must have more than her ordinary charms to make any one here voluntarily choose to spend in the country the long dreary winter.

The Russian, therefore, considers his country-place merely as a summer residence, and even then he regards it as an absolute retirement, where he seldom sees his neighbours, and into which a stranger can hardly be expected to penetrate. Town, he regards

as the scene of all pleasure and refinement, and he therefore takes little pains to render his country-house elegant or luxurious. He has no country amusements to tempt guests to his house; no grouse, no pheasants, no fox-hunting; for few Russians have any taste for field-sports.

Neither has he any higher inducements to attach him to his estate. He has few public duties to perform; no influence beyond his absolute authority over his serfs, no family pride in his inheritance. No one has an independent position of his own, he is but what it pleases the Emperor to make him.

The estate of the father must, at his death, be always\* subdivided among his children, it therefore is useless to expend money in creating or embellishing a place which the son, to whom it will hereafter belong, will probably not have the means of keeping up. Why should any one build a house suited to a fortune of five thousand a year, when the son who inherits it will have but one thousand, and his successor perhaps but two hundred?

The consequence of this system, and of the indefinite multiplication of titles, is, that there is no independent hereditary aristocracy in Russia, no in-

\* The law apportions one-seventh of a man's landed property to his widow for ever, one-fourteenth to each daughter, and the remainder in equal portions among his sons. Every one is, therefore, but a life-tenant on his estate; yet such is the inconsistency of the law, that he may waste it or cut down timber, as he pleases; or he may sell it and dispose of the money as he chooses, both in his lifetime and by will.

fluence of property, no respect or attachment to families in their own neighbourhood.

The inhabitants of the country consist of the owners of the soil and the serfs. The owner looks upon his estate, not with the pride and pleasure of an English gentleman, but simply as the source of a certain annual revenue; and his serfs know, that so long as he is their master, they must fear his power and labour for him; and that, if the estate passes into other hands, they must do the same to-morrow for their new lord. Where there is slavery on one side and despotism on the other, voluntary and sincere attachment need not be looked for, or if found, must be regarded as exceptions to a general rule.

Among those of the same class, the question is, not who a man may be by birth, talent, or merit, but what the Emperor has made him; whether he wears the epaulettes of a General or of a subaltern.

The result of all this, and of the habits which naturally are formed under such circumstances, is, that the handsome, substantial, well-arranged country-seat is unknown in Russia, and the utmost that is attempted is the beauty of the villa, not of the chateau. In fact, all idea of the latter is done away by the want of the park or well wooded lawn, or of any ornamental ground beyond the garden, which is merely divided by a fence from a high-road, a dirty village street, or an open plain, without there being any illusion or any attempt to conceal the boundary.



The garden itself is generally in proportion to the place too large for dress-ground, and is kept in but a slovenly manner; it has, moreover, one natural deficiency which an Englishman cannot help remarking, in the total absence of evergreens, and the less hardy plants and trees, excepting those which are kept under glass in the winter.

For the interior arrangement of the houses, the custom is to have as many rooms as possible, opening en suite. If the reception-rooms are on the first floor, the ground tier is low and reserved for servants' rooms, offices, &c. The kitchen is generally in a detached building.

The bed-room of the master and mistress of the house is usually connected with the drawing-room or saloon, by folding doors, which stand open all day, so that any one who pleases may enter.\* Sometimes a folding screen runs across the room, so as to conceal the bed, washing-stand, &c., and sometimes when the lady has a separate dressing-room, the bed is exposed without hangings, but covered by a handsome silk quilt, while the toilette-table displays the usual silver boxes and cut-glass bottles, which belong to a handsome dressing-case.

\* In the bed-room is usually a little open cupboard, which is filled with images, little black and brown faces set in gold and silver frames; before which a lamp or two is kept burning. In the corner of every room in the house is hung an image. For this reason it is considered extremely disrespectful to keep on a hat for a moment on entering a house, or even a shop.

The rooms by no means boast the same comfort and luxury of furniture which exists in England; the sofas are stiff and hard, and the chairs and tables heavy and clumsy, castors being seldom used; and the walls, instead of being papered or painted, are in general merely white-washed or coloured. I do not mean to say that elegant furniture is unknown in Russia, but that it is not generally diffused as in England. Indeed its preposterous expense must confine it to the houses, and for the most part to the town-houses of a very few rich people. Gams, of Petersburg, will fit up a house with the utmost luxury and good taste, but then his charges will be double what would be paid to a first-rate London upholsterer. Refinement cannot be considered as naturalized in any country till it can be obtained at a reasonable price, and can therefore become habitual to the people.

To return to Russian rooms. The floors are generally bare, with the exception of a small carpet in one corner; they are composed of neatly inlaid wood, or boards painted in imitation of a parquet.

Almost every apartment, without excepting the bed-rooms, is a passage; and this is an inconvenience to which Russians do not appear at all sensible. Since there are no bells, except one sometimes, which communicates from the saloon into the ante-room, the servants cannot live in one part of the house and their masters in another, an arrangement

so materially contributing to the comfort of both, nor can the doors be shut on all that ought to lie behind the scenes. Here the footman must be close to the saloon, the valet must be within call of his master, and the maids must be next door to their mistresses bed-room; and each in general sleeps by night where he or she sat by day.

Having described the Russian gentleman's residence, we now come to the consideration of his property, which he reckons, not by the annual income of his estate, but by the number of *souls*, that is of male peasants, which it contains, for the fair sex is never counted in the census. A Russian, instead of an estate worth so many thousand roubles a-year, talks of possessing so many hundred *souls*. This is the term always used in speaking of the peasants, and its restriction to the male sex is one of the many Russian customs which betray an Asiatic origin.

Early marriages are much encouraged among the serfs, as it is the great object of most landed proprietors to increase the population on their estates. The marriage of girls of all ranks under the age of sixteen years is now forbidden by law, and the punishment for such a marriage, even if the offence is not discovered for years after its commission, is the separation of the husband and wife, with the imprisonment of the latter in a convent for life.

The footing on which the agricultural serf practically stands towards his master, is, in most respects, that of a small tenant; the principal difference being that he cannot change his employment, or move from home without his master's leave, which is sometimes obtained for a certain annual sum called *obrok*, in lieu of service.\* As a general rule, he has a house and a portion of land, for which he pays rent in labour, instead of money. He works three days in the week for his master, and has the remainder of his time at his own disposal. A day's labour of a man includes that of his wife and his horse when requisite.

The peasants are under the immediate authority of one of their own number elected by themselves, and called the *Starosta*, or Elder, of the village. This person acts as a bailiff, receiving the orders of the master or his steward, and superintending the people when at work, as well as maintaining order in the village.

These peasants, who are for the most part in a state of the grossest ignorance, are perfect predestinarians or fatalists; and this doctrine serves as an excuse on all occasions for their habitual improvidence and want of forethought. If a child dies from neglect, or a colt is destroyed by the wolves because it was left in the field at night, the peasant says it

\* For this subject more at large, see "Details of Russian Husbandry," &c.

was the will of God. Sometimes he examines his colt's teeth, and judges by certain signs whether he is fated to become food for wolves. This plan at once shifts all trouble and responsibility off his own shoulders; since if the animal is born to be devoured, of course, no precautions can avert his destiny; while, in the contrary case, they would be obviously superfluous.

The respect for religion which prevails strongly with this people, degenerates, as might be expected from their unenlightened state, into the grossest superstition. They pin their faith on images, and on the strict observance of the severe fasts of the Greek church, which occupy more than half the year, including every Wednesday and Friday, and the eve of every feast. During these fasts, neither meat nor milk, butter, eggs, nor cheese, may be tasted, and on some occasions even the use of fish is forbidden.

Among the upper classes these fasts are almost entirely neglected by the *gentlemen*, as not agreeing with their health. The *ladies* for the most part observe some of the fasts, which they consider more sacred than the others, and some few of them scrupulously obey the rule of the church throughout. Among the peasants, however, the domestic servants, and the trading class, the rule is, I believe, universally obeyed in its utmost rigour; and it is the poor peasant who chiefly feels the suffering and privation which it en-

tails, since he has none of the luxurious substitutes for his ordinary diet which his richer neighbour enjoys.

Yet, though ignorant, superstitious, and a slave, he seems, in general, happy and contented, and bears about him no signs of oppression; his desires are few and easily satisfied; though his fare is coarse and poor, he seldom suffers from cold or hunger, and he is naturally gay, good-humoured, and light-hearted. With domestic servants the case is totally different; they feel the yoke of their bondage in the caprice and ill-humour which they occasionally endure, in the restraint and confinement to which they are subject, and in the constant presence before their eyes of their master's authority and power, which is in every way more galling and vexatious to them than to the village peasant. The conscription is the great evil which the latter has to dread, and a most severe affliction it is when it visits him; but of this I shall take an opportunity of speaking in a future letter. The peasant cannot legally be sold or transferred from one master to another, excepting with the whole of his family; but this law is often broken or evaded, and I have heard of an excellent cook to be disposed of for forty pounds; and in another case, of a man who was to be had for half the money; in fact, although this trade in human flesh is, perhaps, not very common, the sale of an individual is looked upon as nothing extraordinary.

There are few landed proprietors, as I have re-

marked in a former letter, who do not carry on a manufactory of some kind or other, and this practice arises naturally out of the circumstances of the case. The riches of the Russian gentleman lie in the labour of his serfs, which it is his study to turn to good account,\* and he is the more urged to this, since the law which compels the peasant to work for him, requires him to maintain the peasant: if the latter is found begging, the former is liable to a fine. He is therefore a master who must always keep a certain number of workmen, whether they are useful to him or not; and as every kind of agricultural and out-doors employment is at a stand-still during the winter, he naturally turns to the establishment of a manufactory as a means of employing his peasants, and as a source of profit to himself. In some cases the manufactory is at work only during the winter, and the people are employed in the summer in agriculture; though beyond what is necessary for home consumption, this is but an unprofitable trade in most parts of this empire, from the badness of roads, the paucity and distance of markets, and the consequent difficulty in selling produce.

\* Of course, the income derived from an estate depends upon the system of management, and upon the profit from the labour of the peasants. I believe, however, that an annual revenue to the proprietor of thirty-three or thirty-four shillings per head, reckoning all the male serfs, young and old, may be taken as a fair average.

The largest landed proprietor in Russia is Count Cheremetieff, the number of his *souls* being computed at a hundred and ten thousand.



The alternate employment of the same man in the field and in the factory, which would be attempted in most countries with little success, is here rendered practicable and easy by the versatile genius of the Russian peasants, one of whose leading national characteristics is a general capability of turning his hand to any kind of work which he may be required to undertake. He will plough to-day, weave to-morrow, help to build a house the third day, and the fourth, if his master needs an extra coachman, he will mount the box and drive four horses abreast, as though it were his daily occupation. It is probable that none of these operations, except, perhaps, the last, will be as well performed as in a country where the division of labour is more thoroughly understood. They will all, however, be sufficiently well done to serve the turn, a favourite phrase in Russia. These people are a very ingenious race, but perseverance is wanting; and though they will carry many arts to a high degree of excellence, they will generally stop short of the point of perfection, and it will be long before their manufactures can rival the finish and durability of English goods.

Where the manufactory is established on a considerable scale, and is constantly at work, the peasants are usually put on the footing of hired labourers, and instead of having an allotment of land, are paid for their work, and left to provide themselves with the necessaries of life. Their master, it is true,

can compel them to work in his manufactory, and that on his own terms; but these are regulated by custom, and since the serfs are paid at the same rate with the free workmen who may be employed with them, they seldom have reason to complain of injustice.

Not only have the Russian nobles, from the nature of their property and the constitution of the country, become manufacturers, but they carry on the business in every branch, almost entirely to the exclusion of other classes, since they alone can command without difficulty, and on advantageous terms, the hands necessary for the purpose. A manufacturer, who is not noble, being incapable by law of possessing serfs, while free labour is scarce, must compete at a disadvantage with a rival, who can enforce the performance of whatever work he requires, and who has his operatives, as it were under military discipline. Besides the regularly established manufactories, the exercise of various arts on a smaller scale in private houses, either for profit or home consumption is very general. One consequence of this system of things is, that the prices and qualities of various fabrics, such as cloth, linen, paper, glass, china, &c., are subjects of general interest and of common conversation here, in the same manner that farming and planting are discussed by country gentlemen in England.

Boys are often sent to Petersburg or Moscow, as

apprentices, to learn various trades, which they afterwards practise at home for the use and profit of their masters, who thus, in a remote country district, have well-taught cabinet-makers, coach-makers, smiths, and sometimes medical practitioners and musicians always at command.\*

I have often been surprised at the excellence of a home-made carriage (the springs only having been purchased elsewhere), for the art of coach-making is one of those most generally exercised for private use, owing, doubtless, to the number of equipages which a Russian habitually requires, and which are thus obtained at a cheap rate.

Many ladies employ a number of girls, generally the children of household servants, in embroidering and making all kinds of fancy-work, which they execute most beautifully, and which their mistress sells, receiving orders for it, as is common in charity-schools in England. In a house where we were visiting some time ago, we were shown a shawl with corners and borders of a most beautiful pattern of flowers in brilliant colours, which had been entirely made at home by a young girl, who brought it in to exhibit it, and who was then employed upon another which we saw in progress. Even the

\* Occasionally, at the expiration of their apprenticeship, these people, instead of returning to their masters, pay them a sum agreed upon as an equivalent for their services, and establish themselves in their trades on their own account in towns. The rent thus paid by the peasants is called an *obrok*.

wool, the colours of which were admirable, had been dyed in the house. The shawl was valued at fifteen hundred roubles, about sixty-two pounds; it had occupied the girl who made it about a year and a half.

In almost every house some art is carried on, useful or ornamental, and women are employed in spinning, weaving, knitting, carpet-making, &c.; for the raw material in Russia is worth little, and the manufactured article alone is valuable in the market.

The ladies of England, "who live at home at ease," little know the disagreeable and troublesome duties of inspection and correction, which often devolve upon the mistress of a family in Russia, from all the various branches of domestic industry which she is obliged to superintend.

## LETTER X.

Fair at Tamboff—Fire-engines to assist the police—Tartar purchasers of horse-flesh—Don Cossacks—Mode of backing a colt—Trotting-matches—Town of Tamboff—Hall of assembly—Constitution of the assembly of the nobles—Office of Marshal of the nobility—Mode of transacting business—Functions of the assembly—Accident to the Emperor near Tifflis—His proceedings in Georgia—Anecdote of the Grand Duchess Marie.

*Rascazava, November 10th, 1837.*

WE returned into the country, a few days ago, from Tamboff, where we spent a week, to see the fair, of which I made mention in my last letter, and which was instituted, it seems, in commemoration of the finding of an image of the Virgin, which is now at Veronish, and which, like the Palladium, was sent down from heaven, and at length discovered, after having been hid for many years on earth.

The fair is not held in the town, for fear of fire ; but on an extensive steppe or down, about three quarters of a mile off.

On this down a perfect village was erected of wooden booths, in which shops were opened for the sale of all kinds of goods, especially every article

necessary for winter clothing, which was at the time exceedingly attractive, as we had a hard frost during the whole week.

There were several fur-shops very handsomely provided with skins of all kinds, and of all prices; bear, fox, sable, beaver, wolf, and a variety of others, of which I do not know the names. Russians sometimes go to an enormous expence in fur; but a handsome fox-skin, for a lady's cloak, may be had for about eight pounds, and a beaver collar, which is the handsomest, and most agreeable fur for the purpose, for a lady or gentleman, will cost from eight to twelve pounds. A bear-skin pelisse, which is only fit for wearing in a sledge, or in travelling, costs about thirty pounds. There were also Tartar merchants, with shaven heads and skull-caps, who sold shawls, dressing-gowns, slippers, and all kinds of eastern manufactures; while close by them were drapers, silk-mercens, and all the tradesmen requisite to furnish a lady's toilette, with goods home-made, or imported from England or France. The shopkeepers were all wrapped up in furs, for the booths were bitterly cold.

Who would expect, at a country fair, to find church bells for sale! There were a number of all sizes, some being of a very considerable weight of metal. They were hung on wooden frames in an open space, so that a customer could easily ring them to judge of their tones. Whether many of these bells were sold,

I cannot tell; but I was told that there was always a certain demand for them at the fair.

A number of fire-engines were stationed round the booths, to be useful not only in the event of fire, but as assistants to the police in keeping order; since, in case of a mob of drunken and disorderly people assembling at night, an engine playing into the midst of them speedily disperses the crowd.

The horse-fair, altogether, presented a most curious scene; a large space of the steppe was thickly covered with tilègas, or little waggons, behind which the horses for sale were tied; and the strange figures of the people in their sheep-skin coats and fur caps, with their long beards, had any thing but an European character. In one part of the fair were to be seen showy horses, covered with gaudy cloths, tied three or four together behind tilègas, and from time to time creating a disturbance by kicking and fighting with their companions or neighbours. In another quarter were Tartars bargaining for miserable worn-out animals, such as in England may be seen awaiting their time in the paddock adjoining a kennel; but which the Tartar purchases as food, not for his dogs, but himself; for horse-flesh is the principal fare of these Russian Mahometans, who are tolerably numerous in this neighbourhood.

In another part of the fair, again, were dealers from the Don, with large lots of Cossack and Bashkir horses. The Cossack horse is raw-boned and



spare, carrying little flesh, and apparently not equal to any great weight; but he is better than he looks, is hardy, active, and enduring: he is little used for harness, for his master is a horseman bred and born. The Bashkir horse is short and punchy, with a thick neck and a dull heavy head; but he will travel seventy miles without stopping or tiring. These animals, of both breeds, were chiefly wild unbroken colts, and were not haltered like the rest, and tied behind tilègas, but enclosed twenty or thirty together, in pens surrounded by a strong railing. In each pen was a lad with a whip, who kept the horses moving slowly round and round.

It was curious to see the process of showing them to purchasers. When a customer fixed his eye on a horse, and wished to examine him and see his action, the dealer, with the help of a long stick, threw a noose over the horse's head, and pulled it tight round his throat. The bar which closed the pen was then let down, and the lad inside, keeping the other horses away from the opening, drove out the one which had been selected. He, of course, on finding himself on the open plain, immediately tried to run away; his escape, however, was not to be effected, for his owner had a firm hand on the rope round his neck, and a vigorous pull tightened the noose, so as almost to strangle the horse. The assistant having closed the pen, now came to his master's aid; and having forced a bridle on the head

of the poor frightened brute, boldly jumped on his back. The colt, of course, resented this new aggression, by rearing, kicking, plunging, and doing all in his power to rid himself of his unceremonious rider; the Cossack, however, held fast by the mane, clung tightly with his legs, and kept a firm seat. Presently he urged on the horse, his master still holding the rope round the animal's neck. After a minute or two the colt became more tranquil; the end of the rope was given to the rider, and he was left to take care of himself. He immediately set off at full gallop across the steppe, and returned after a while at the same pace, pulling up with some difficulty when he reached the spot from which he had started.

This process, which I saw followed with two or three horses, reminded me of the account given by Sir Francis Head, in his "Journey across the Pampas," of the manner of breaking in wild horses in South America.

The Cossack dealers had their own horses, saddled and bridled, tied to the railings of the pens, and every now and then a couple of them would mount, and starting off at full gallop, have a wild race against one another across the steppe. The ground was hard and slippery from the frost, but these fellows appeared to fear neither for themselves nor their horses, though one of them, who was neither young nor light, met with rather an awkward tumble; however, he

appeared to care nothing for it. He was coming at full speed down hill, and not having pulled up in time, was obliged to turn on one side to avoid the crowd; in so doing his horse slipped and fell flat on his side. I expected the rider to be considerably hurt, but he was instantly on his legs, urged up his horse, mounted, and set off again at full gallop across the plain. The Cossacks, who appear to be the only Russians much given to horsemanship, ride with snaffle bridles and upon a peaked saddle, with a leather cushion girthed upon it, so that they sit very high. They have a very peculiar seat, riding rather on one side, looking to the right, with the right toe and knee pointing out, and the left pressed closely to the horse. They wear no spurs, but carry a whip, seemingly of pig-skin, like a small flail, in their hands.

Adjoining the space which was occupied by the horse-fair, is a race-course for trotting matches, which are greatly in vogue in Russia at present. Great attention is paid, especially in this part of the country, to breeding these horses, which often command very high prices; they are many of them large and showy, like London cabriolet horses. We saw these horses training every evening on the race-course; they are driven in light droschkas; the vehicle being simply a board about four or five feet long, covered with a cushion, and placed on four low wheels. On this bench the driver sits astride, with his feet resting on iron bars, which project on

either side for this purpose. When a trotter is in training, a boy on another horse generally gallops by his side to excite him: the art of driving them is studied as jockeyship is in England. In winter a place is marked out with branches of trees on the ice, for trotting-matches, and a light sledge is used instead of the droschka.

I have not much to say in praise of the beauty of Tamboff as a town; from the scarcity of stone, it consists chiefly of wooden houses, and only one or two of the principal streets are paved: in the others, the mud in wet weather is ploughed with ruts axle-deep; and frost having now succeeded rain, these roads are as hard as stone, and in a condition to endanger breaking the wheels of any carriage which should venture upon them, or the legs of the horses that drew it.

Being a government town, Tamboff, of course, boasts an archbishop and a monastery; there is also a nunnery there, and a certain number of churches, none of them, however, are remarkable. The Government house has the dismal air of a county hospital; and the only building in the place, of any pretension, is the Hall of Assembly of the nobles, which contains a fine room, with a gallery running round three sides, supported on Corinthian pillars. At the upper end is a marvellously bad portrait of the Emperor under a canopy. His Majesty's portrait is placed in all public rooms, sometimes well and some-

times ill painted; but the pictures are all unvarying copies of some original, in which the Emperor is depicted in uniform, with white leather breeches and jack-boots, looking sternly over a green and blue landscape to the right, with his cocked-hat in his right hand, and his left thumb stuck into his sash, apparently to relieve himself from the exceeding pressure of that tightly drawn portion of his costume.

The nobles, that is to say the gentlemen, of every government in Russia, form an assembly, in which every one who owns within the province a hundred peasants, is entitled to vote. They meet once in three years to elect a *Marshal* for each district, of which there are twelve in every province, and a *Grand-Marshal* for the whole government. The latter stands next in rank to the governor. He has the title of Excellency and the grade of General while he remains in office, and if he is elected three several times, he retains his precedence for life. After being elected, he must be confirmed in his office by the Emperor, before he can enter on his functions. These Marshals represent the nobles, and meet, from time to time, for the transaction of business, since the General Assembly cannot meet oftener than triennially, except by an extraordinary permission from the Emperor. The business of the Assembly relates chiefly to the management and disposal of funds raised by a voluntary rate among themselves for the establishment and maintenance of

public institutions, such as schools, hospitals, &c. The wardship of minors, lunatics, and even spend-thrifts among their own number, is vested in their hands, and, practically speaking, in the hands of their representatives the Marshals. If a noble is injuring his children by wasting his estate, the Assembly have the power, which is often exercised, of taking the management of his property into their own hands for the benefit of his family, and of putting him upon an allowance.

At the meeting of the Assembly, thirteen tables are placed in the great hall, one for the Marshal of the government, and one for the nobles of each district, with their Marshal as chairman. A government in Russia may be considered as a county, and the districts into which it is divided as corresponding to our English hundreds. When the Grand-Marshal proposes a question, he assembles the twelve Marshals at his table, and addresses himself to them; each of them then goes to the table of his district and puts the question, after it has been discussed, to the vote, and having thus ascertained the decision of the majority of his constituents, he returns to the Marshals' table and gives his voice accordingly, and the question is finally decided by the majority of districts.

Any individual may propose a question: in this case, it is first put to the vote at the table to which he belongs; if it is rejected there, it is of course

lost; but if it is carried, the Marshal reports it to the Grand-Marshal, who puts it to the vote of the meeting in the manner which I have described above.

In this way the nobles assess themselves voluntarily for various purposes of public utility according to the number of peasants possessed by each. Their vote receives the ratification of the Emperor, and is then binding on all, and payment of the contributions, though originally voluntary, can be enforced.

The election of the Marshals is by ballot; in case the Grand-Marshal is ill, or from any other cause incapacitated from attending to his duties, the Marshal of the district in which the government-town is situated, supplies his place *ad interim*. The functions of the Assembly are very narrowly limited, and the discussion in it of political questions is altogether prohibited; its existence, nevertheless, may hereafter prove the germ of free institutions; its powers may be developed, and the habit thus acquired of electing representatives, and of discussing public questions may be extended to more important objects, even to legislation and government.

We have just received accounts of the Emperor having been upset in his carriage in a very dangerous way, near Tifflis, in Georgia. Considering the reckless pace at which he insists upon being driven over all sorts of roads, it is surprising he does not more frequently meet with accidents; two years ago, however, he was overturned, and broke his collar-



bone, and he is very generally blamed for the manner in which in his frequent journeys he risks his life without any object, considering how valuable that life is to the preserving the internal peace and tranquillity of Russia, which would incur the utmost risk should any unfortunate accident place a young and inexperienced sovereign on the throne in the place of Nicholas, whose firm and severe character smothered rebellion and discontent.

The accident which has just occurred happened as follows. At Tifflis, the Master-of-police put the horses belonging to the fire-engines to the Emperor's carriage. These being spirited animals, accustomed to be driven at a great pace, were not easy to manage; and it seems that a peasant who knew little of driving, and was not used to the horses, was put on the box, in place of the man who usually had the charge of them, but whom it was not etiquette to send with the Emperor because he was a soldier.

In descending a steep mountain by a zigzag road overhanging a precipice, the servant neglected to lock the wheel, the horses refused to hold, and broke into a gallop, and at length, at a corner, the leaders, instead of taking the turn, jumped over the low parapet, against which the calèche was dashed and upset, with violence, the front part of it being broken to pieces. The Cossack soldiers who were escorting the Emperor immediately cut the traces, and the leaders fell down the precipice, the postillion

escaping. Count Orloff, who was with the Emperor, had his shoulder dislocated; the Emperor fell over him, and was received in the arms of the officer of Cossacks, to whom, seeing he was much alarmed, he said, "Don't be frightened, I am not hurt;" he then shook himself to ascertain the fact, crossed himself, and thanked God for having preserved him, and presently asked for a horse, which he mounted and rode fifteen miles to the next station, where he got another carriage, and proceeded on his journey. He travels at the rate of from fifteen to eighteen miles an hour, being preceded by an *avant-courier*, so that he finds horses always waiting, and the time allowed for changing is but two minutes. It is said, that he went into Georgia contrary to his original intentions, in order to enquire into certain abuses and acts of tyranny under which it was alleged that the people were suffering. The result of his visit was, that various abuses were rectified, and the perpetrators punished. The colonel of a regiment at Tifflis, in particular, a man who was also son-in-law to the Governor, was convicted of numerous acts of cruelty and perversion of his authority. The Emperor ordered his epaulettes to be stripped off; and seeing that every one hesitated to obey his orders, he tore them off with his own hands, declaring that the guilty officer was unworthy to wear them, and then he presented the forfeited epaulettes to the brother-in-law of the disgraced colonel, the governor's son,

expressing a hope that he would do them more credit. If his conduct in thus with his own hand executing his own decrees was not very dignified, his just and impartial decisions have gained His Majesty, as we hear, great credit and popularity in Georgia.

The Emperor has incurred perils by sea as well as by land this year; for in one of his late excursions on the Black Sea, his vessel, a steamer, was nearly driven on shore in a storm, and was for some time in considerable danger. On landing, he was received by the Empress and his family, but he had hardly stepped ashore, before a Tartar girl pressed forward into the group and, kneeling down, presented a petition; the Emperor was very angry at the intrusion, and exclaimed that it was very hard he could not be left undisturbed by strangers at the moment of meeting with his wife and children, after an absence; upon this the petitioner said, "Yes, Sire, but the Tartars also are your children." The Emperor looked down, and saw that it was his own eldest and, it is said, favourite daughter, the Grand Duchess Marie.\*

\* A portrait of the Grand Duchess Marie in this disguise was painted, and presented by her to her father on his name's-day this year.

## LETTER XI.

Frost—White hares—Russian game-laws—A wolf in a house—The mode in which these animals catch dogs—Anecdotes of wolves—Their haunts—Modes of destroying them—By poison, pitfalls, traps, shooting—A man besieged by wolves—Bears—Good sport—Bear-shooting—Mode in Novogorod of getting rid of bears—Singular notions with respect to these animals—Lynxes—Elks.

*Rascazava, November 20th, 1837.*

THE winter, according to our English ideas, has now fairly set in, and that with considerable severity. Since the beginning of this month, with the exception of a thaw once or twice, for a day or two, we have had very severe frost, and the ice over the rivers is beginning to be passable, even for horses and vehicles. Nevertheless, in Russia it is still considered as autumn; for, with the exception of a mere occasional sprinkling, we have as yet no snow, which is so far an advantage, that the ground is dry and hard under foot, and we are not precluded from taking exercise and enjoying the sunshine.

Of all animals it appears to me that the hares just at present have most reason to wish for snow; they

are by this time perfectly white, and until the ground is the same colour with themselves, they may be seen sitting fifty yards off, and must fall a very easy prey to their enemies the wolf and the eagle, to say nothing of human pursuers, who in this country make no scruple of shooting a hare upon its form.

You perhaps may not be aware that there are game-laws in Russia, which prohibit the destruction of game in the spring; these laws, however, are not, I believe, very rigidly enforced.

I was presented, the other day, with the skin of a large wolf, which was killed last winter in rather a curious way, in a neighbouring gentleman's house. The house, which is small, is situated in a retired spot on the outskirts of a large wood, which extends up to the very door. There were some puppies about, which must have attracted the wolf, and, emboldened by famine, he followed one of them into the house, a step which eventually proved as fatal to himself as to his prey, but he at least had the satisfaction of one more feast before he died. The house-door opened into a small ante-room, on one side of which was the kitchen, and on the other a room, in which the cook's wife either lived or was in some way employed. This woman came in, and calling to her husband in the kitchen to say that she had seen a strange dog follow one of the puppies into the house, she went into her own room; as it was dusk the mistake of the woman was easily made.

The cook, upon his wife's information, looked out of the kitchen, and saw that there was a wolf worrying the puppy: he therefore called to the people in the yard, who pulled to the outer door, so that the animal could not escape, and who then fetched a gun which they handed in through the window to the cook. The wolf was now alarmed; and when the man opened the door cautiously, and thrust forward the gun to shoot, the beast rushed at him, and seizing the barrel of the gun in his teeth, almost pulled it out of the cook's hands. He, however, recovered it, and retreating, shut the door upon the animal. The latter, after a few minutes, lay down, and when the cook looked forth again, he saw the wolf crouched against his wife's door. He called to her to make a noise inside, upon which the beast got up, and moving a little on one side, received a shot in the head, which the cook followed up by beating out his brains with the butt-end of the gun. The unfortunate puppy was found half eaten in the corner of the room.

Wolves are exceedingly fond of dog's-flesh, and they sometimes make use of a very cunning stratagem to obtain it. A wolf or two will approach a village in the day-time, upon which all the dogs run out and begin to bark at them; the wolves then pretend to be frightened and retire, upon which the dogs take courage and advance; at length, by alternately stopping and running away, the wolves entice

a few of the more adventurous curs to a considerable distance from the village, when they suddenly turn round upon their foremost pursuers and carry them off.

Most parts of Russia are sadly infested by these animals, which commit great depredations among the cattle. They are, generally speaking, afraid of human beings, but they occasionally pick up a child in the woods, and instances are by no means wanting of their attacking even grown-up men when the weather is very severe. These misfortunes occasionally happen in the neighbourhood of Petersburg, where the wolves are extremely numerous and very daring. At the country-house of a near relation of M—'s, about twelve miles from Petersburg, a man was, a year or two ago, attacked in the garden by a single wolf and severely wounded, escaping with difficulty with his life. The same place was the scene of another curious wolf-adventure. A disturbance was heard at night outside the house (I suppose among the dogs); however, several people went out to see what was the matter, but they discovered nothing, and though they supposed that a wolf had been there, they came back into the house. Presently, however, they missed one of the servants, a lad of eighteen, who had been one of the first to sally forth. As he did not return, they became alarmed, and went out again with lanterns to search for him: they were not long before they found him stretched on



the ground, apparently dead, with a wolf lying dead by his side: the man, however, was only in a swoon, and soon recovered on being raised up. As soon as he was able to give an account of himself, it appeared, that on the first alarm he had run out of the house with a large stick in his hand, and had been immediately attacked by the wolf, which so terrified him, that aiming one instinctive blow at his enemy, he had fallen down in the senseless state in which he was found: the single blow of his heavy stick had, however, by an extraordinary accident, hit the wolf on the head and killed him.

When seven or eight of these animals are collected together in the winter, they are often sufficiently dangerous, and it is said that a single wolf, on meeting with a man in a lonely place, will sometimes commence howling, until his friends around assemble as at the sound of a dinner bell, in sufficient numbers to venture on the attack. They will sometimes even assail travellers on the high-road; a friend of mine told me that once, between Moscow and Petersburg, he was journeying in an open sledge, it being excessively cold, and he was pursued for some miles by a pack of wolves who ran by the side of the sledge, jumping up at it, and so close, that his valet, who was sitting by his side, stabbed at the brutes with a dagger and wounded some of them; but the wolves did not give up the pursuit till they met a long string of sledges, which alarmed them.

The wolf prefers living in small brushwood covers near a village, to inhabiting the large forests; these, however, are the fastnesses of his race, and the existence of these immense tracts of wood and desert in Russia would perhaps defeat any attempt to rid the country of those ferocious beasts. It is, however, difficult to believe, that such a pest might not be in some measure put down if exertion were systematically made; without combination, however, the thing is impossible, and in most parts of the country the wolves are rarely molested; indeed, the peasants often have a prejudice against so doing, as they think it only exasperates the animals and makes them more fierce and dangerous: I need not say that this is a most absurd notion, and that where it prevails, the beasts become only more daring by impunity. They often show themselves in broad day-light, but I have never seen one since I have been in the country.

There are various ways of destroying wolves; sometimes this is done by poison, the best being *nux vomica*, since it does not, like arsenic, injure the fur, which is some consideration, for a wolf's skin raw is worth from eight to ten shillings. A calf, or some other dead animal, is well impregnated with *nux vomica*, and laid in a retired spot in a wood; the wolves find it, and feast on it, and the effect of the poison is very rapid. I have heard of six wolves being destroyed in this manner in one night; four

were found dead on the spot, and two others were discovered afterwards at a little distance.

Every one has heard of the mode of catching these animals in pitfalls, by placing a lamb or a pig as a bait, on the top of a post rising out of the pit: they have in Russia a kind of trap, which is exceedingly simple, but which I never heard of before I came into the country. A small circle is inclosed with a palisade or some other fence, too high for a wolf to leap or climb over; this fence is again surrounded by another of the same kind, leaving a narrow space between the two: the outer fence has a door, which opens inwards, so as to fill up the space between the two palisades when it is set open. A lamb or a pig is placed at night in the inner circle, and being alone and cold, it naturally bleats, or grunts and squeals; the noise attracts the wolf, who enters the door which is open, and finding the inner fence still between him and his prey, prowls round it in hopes of discovering an opening. When he arrives at the door, having made the circuit of the place, he pushes against it, and thus shuts it to, and imprisons himself; for the space in which he is, being narrow, and his back-bone very inflexible, he cannot turn, and the door is of course so hung as to shut from a very light pressure.

You have heard of the plan of shooting wolves on a moonlight night in winter, when two or three sportsmen place themselves, well-armed, in a sledge, and are driven through the roads and tracks in the woods.

As they go along, they pull the ears of a young pig which they take with them, and make it squeal, while behind the sledge trails a long rope, with a wisp of straw at the end of it. The wolf hears the pig squeal, and seeing the bundle of straw dancing along over the snow in the moonlight, makes a dash at it, mistaking it for his prey, and thus presents a fair mark to the guns in the sledge. This sport, like all others, has its vicissitudes; sometimes the disappointment is incurred of a blank night, and sometimes, on the other hand, too much game is started, and the amusement becomes somewhat dangerous. If the sportsmen have not time to pick up the wolves they kill, the others tear the bodies of their dead companions, and, becoming furious, will attack the sledges. A gentleman who lives near here, and whom we often see, met with an adventure of this kind some time ago, and after making his pig squeal for some hours in vain, at length unexpectedly attracted such a troop of wolves, that he was obliged to fly for safety and trust to his horses' heels, and he was pursued by twelve or fourteen of the beasts even into the village.

The peasants sometimes build a hut in a wood, and throw the carcasses of dead horses, and other animals near the spot, to attract the wolves; they then go before night, and ensconce themselves in the hut, in hopes of getting a shot at a wolf, through loop-holes which they leave in the walls of their sheltering

place. Unless, however, they make the hut very firm and strong, they occasionally run some risk. I have been told a story of a man, whose baits drew around him one night an unusual number of wolves; he kept firing away from his lurking place, sometimes killing, sometimes wounding, and sometimes missing, till at last he had expended all his ammunition—still he was surrounded by enemies, who, becoming infuriated, attacked his fortress, and tried to make their way in. The garrison was defenceless, but the building was strong and resisted the assault, nor did the wolves succeed better by attempting to mine and work a way under the walls; strong stakes, which had been providently driven in on every side, frustrated their endeavours: the besiegers, therefore, changed their tactics, and converted the assault into a close blockade, hoping to starve out the enemy. Through whichever of his loop-holes the poor man looked out, his eyes encountered those of a wolf seated like a dog on his haunches, and keeping patient watch. When morning came he expected these sentinels to depart; but, no, they were far too inveterate, and though some went away, some still remained, and kept close guard all day. All that night he was imprisoned, and it was not till the following day that he was released; whether the wolves got tired of waiting, or whether his friends, knowing the expedition on which he had set out, came in search of him, I do not remember.

Bears, though they abound in Russia, are not to be met with, like wolves, in every part of the country; there are numerous districts in which they are never heard of, for they shun cultivation and human dwellings, and are only to be found in deep and extensive forests.

In some of those places where bears abound, there are men who make it their business in the winter to go in pursuit of them alone, and armed only with a strong knife and a spear, with which implements, by courage and dexterity, they succeed in destroying them.

Many years ago an English, or rather, I believe, a Scotch gentleman, who was settled in this country, and who was a great sportsman, was shooting small game in the woods in the north of Russia, when he heard the snoring of an animal, and looking round, after a little while, discovered the head of an enormous bear sleeping. Having only small shot in his gun, he retreated quietly, breaking the twigs as he went, in order that he might be able to find the spot again. He then made the best of his way to his temporary residence, a small cottage not far off, and proceeded immediately to cast a dozen balls: as soon as he was ready, he with some difficulty induced a peasant to accompany him with an axe and a dog to the spot where he had seen the bear, and which he easily found again. The noise which he made in approaching roused the animal, but as it raised its head, the

sportsman fired and killed it at one shot; he called in triumph to his attendant who had kept at a respectful distance, but in the middle of his exultation, a second bear came forth from behind the first. He was somewhat taken by surprise, however he fired his second barrel and broke the animal's leg, when lo! from the same prolific lair, a third bear appeared on the scene. The dog, however, came up and attracted its attention, while our hero took to his heels and ran away; his only object however was to gain time for reloading his gun, and as soon as he had accomplished this necessary operation, he gallantly returned to the charge, and killed with his first barrel the third bear, which was still engaged with the dog, and with his second the wounded animal; having thus killed three bears single-handed in four shots. The peasant, as soon as he saw that they were all prostrate, ventured forward for the first time, and began most valiantly to hack away with his axe at the vanquished foe.

The large bear was the dam, and, as I am assured, an enormous beast, and the two others were cubs of a year old, quite grown enough to be dangerous.

In the Government of Novogorod which abounds in forests, and is much infested by these animals, the peasants have, I am told, a most singular method of ridding themselves of their disagreeable neighbours.

They find the young ones in the spring, and watching their opportunity, carry them off in the absence of their parents. They then fasten them on



a raft by nailing their feet to it, and set them afloat on the river. The old bears hear their cries and follow the raft down the stream; at length the young ones die, and their parents become furious, and attack whatever they meet; but they are now at a considerable distance from their original haunts, so that those who were the authors of their misfortune, are not those who suffer from their vengeance. I was told this story by a lady, who assured me she had herself seen a raft floating with the young bears dead upon it.

The Russians have some singular notions about bears; among other stories they say that a fashionable pair of bears relieve themselves from the troubles of education by employing as a preceptor for their young ones, a bear of inferior rank, who is weak and requires protection, and who takes charge of the young family while their parents go out to catch food. The bear leader, who is called in Russ, *Pestoon*, or pedagogue, takes his charge to play in the sun, on the outskirts of the wood, keeping watch himself, and warning them by a cry, if any danger approaches. This very sensible custom appears not to have been as yet introduced among the Novogorod bears, since it would otherwise prove a great protection to their progeny against the cruelties practised upon them in that part of the country.

Besides bears and wolves, lynxes are tolerably numerous in the forests near Petersburg; they are, how-

ever, I believe, only destructive to hares ; they are ugly beasts of a dirty striped grey, with a short tail, looking as if it had been docked.

There are no deer in most parts of Russia, but elks may be met with in the winter within fifty miles of Petersburg : it, however, requires the assistance of one or two hundred peasants, as well as considerable skill and management to get the elks within shot. These noble animals stand about twenty hands high, but there is little except the pleasure of the pursuit to reward the sportsman, for the skin is coarse, and the flesh by no means a delicacy.

## LETTER XII.

A peasant's wedding—Lawful periods for marriage—Etiquette for marriages—*Mariages de convenance*—Parental authority—Anecdote of a Moscow merchant and his son-in-law.

*Rascazava, Nov. 25th, 1837.*

WE had a wedding here a few days ago, and we went into the gallery of the church to witness the ceremony, which began at half-past seven in the evening, and lasted nearly three-quarters of an hour. The bridegroom was a peasant of rather a superior class, and in good circumstances, but still a serf; and the bride was the daughter of a Tamboff tradesman. In a case like this the wife becomes a slave, but she regains her liberty at her husband's death if she survives him. The church was of course lighted up, and a small altar was placed in the middle; in front of the altar a carpet is always stretched, on which the couple stand, each holding a lighted taper during the ceremony: they walk up to it side by side, and it is supposed that whichever first sets foot on it, will hereafter have the upper hand in the household. Towards the latter part of the ceremony, after a

number of prayers and hymns, two crowns of gilt metal were brought to the priest, and he placed them, after making the sign of the cross and pronouncing a short blessing, on the heads of the pair whom he was marrying; he then joined their hands and led them three times round the altar. A cup filled with wine and water was then brought, of which the bride and bridegroom tasted each three times. After this a homily was read on the mutual duties of husband and wife, but this was no necessary part of the ceremony. At the conclusion, the priest desired the newly married couple to kiss one another, and when they had done so, their friends all crowded round them with kisses and congratulations. The crowns, which had been taken off their heads, were now put on again, and they walked out of church preceded by the priest and deacon bearing the cross, and by a boy carrying a consecrated image to be placed in their bed-room. The bride, who was rather a pretty girl and only seventeen, looked sadly worn out, which was not surprising, as she had come from Tamboff that morning, a journey of six or seven hours over a bad road; and had, according to the custom of her class on the occasion of their marriage, tasted no food all day.

The priest was to join the bridal supper, and I was told that there would be further prayers and ceremonies in the house, and that the happy couple would sit all the evening with the crowns on their

heads. The poorer peasants do not take the crowns out of the church, as they have to pay an extra fee to the priest for the permission. At weddings in a higher sphere, the crowns are never actually worn, but are held over the heads of the bride and bridegroom during the ceremony by their friends. No marriage can take place in the Greek church, during any of the fasts, nor at other times on a Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. The lawful periods are therefore limited to four days in the week, during less than half the year. Among the upper classes the ceremony generally takes place at night, and the married couple, instead of setting off immediately together into retirement for a while, according to the sensible English fashion, are expected to remain for some time with the parents of the lady. Both are required by rigorous etiquette to write beforehand to announce their approaching union to every relation they possess, and to take the earliest opportunity after their marriage of paying them a visit uninvited. This last is, indeed, an attention which is expected not only by relations, but also by friends, and often even by mere acquaintances. A lady at Moscow told me that she was taken in this manner, as a bride, into about seventy houses, the greater part of which she had never entered since. All general rules have exceptions, but it appears to me, from all that I have heard and can ascertain, that a very great proportion of Russian marriages are mere matters of business and

calculation, in which family interests are alone considered, and the feelings and inclinations of the parties most concerned are utterly disregarded. A union between two persons is arranged by their respective parents, and they are expected submissively to acquiesce. In the upper classes this is one necessary and natural consequence of the restraint which is placed upon the social intercourse of the two sexes, so that the young men and young ladies have rarely the opportunity of becoming well acquainted with one another. Another important reason for the frequency of *mariages de convenance*, and one which pervades all classes, may be found in the exaggerated notions of parental authority which prevail in this country, where a person at the age of thirty is often considered as incapable of judging and acting for himself as he was at the age of ten. The results of this system are of course anything but favourable to the natural attachment of children to their fathers and mothers, since sincere affection, and a voluntary desire to please, soon vanish where unreasonable sacrifices are exacted.

Parental tyranny is carried to its highest pitch among the tradesmen and the peasants, and therefore interested marriages, where the affections are no way concerned, or rather where they are often outraged, are as common among these classes as among the higher orders. Peasants, however, cannot marry without the consent of their master, and he, there-

fore, has it in his power to a considerable extent to check the evil. If he wishes to do so, whenever his consent is asked, he sends for the young couple, and speaks to each in private, encouraging them to tell him the truth, and endeavouring to ascertain whether they really wish to be married, or whether the matter has been arranged between their families without their desire. If in this manner the master discovers that they are repugnant to the union, or that their affections are fixed elsewhere, he can easily find a plausible excuse for refusing his consent to the marriage, without betraying to the parents the confidence reposed in him.

I am assured that the following anecdote is true; and it seems characteristic of the Russian tradesman, whose propensities to cheat and over-reach are sometimes rather too strongly developed.

A marriage had been arranged between two families in the trading class at Moscow. The father of the young lady was rich, and it was agreed that he should provide her with a handsome trousseau, and that he should pay his son-in-law her fortune of two hundred thousand roubles, about eight thousand pounds, on the morning of the wedding. The happy day at length arrived, the trousseau or *pri-dannie* was, according to custom, packed in handsome chests, placed on cars, and paraded through the streets to the bridegroom's house, to display the wealth of the family; it having been already, with



the same laudable object, exhibited as usual in the bride's apartments to all who chose to come, either to criticise or to admire.

Before the wedding, the father of the lady presented her intended husband with the promised dowry of his daughter; as, however, it was now time to proceed to church, he remarked to the young man, "You can't carry such a sum of money as this about you, so you had better leave it with me, and you can take it home with you at night." To this proposal the other readily assented; the wedding was duly solemnized, and was as usual celebrated afterwards by a vast deal of eating and drinking; and when the happy couple went home at night, the bridegroom, unsuspecting from wine and love, was easily persuaded to leave his money in his father-in-law's care till the following morning.

The next day, he was hardly dressed, when he was told there were some men enquiring for him; he at first refused to see them, saying, "it was not a moment for business, and he would attend to none that day;" the people, however, persisted in their demand for admission, and were at length let in. On seeing the bridegroom, they immediately told him they were come for the *chests*. What chests? was the reply. Why the *pridannie*, to be sure. "Pooh!" said the young man, who supposed that the ornamented chests had been hired for the occasion, "you shall have your boxes, but you are

in a great hurry, my wife has not had time yet to unpack her things, and put them in their proper places." The lady, who was standing by, looked very foolish at this, while the men replied, that they must have not only the chests, but also their contents. Upon this, the bridegroom got in a rage, and asked if they meant to carry off his wife's wardrobe. "Don't talk nonsense about your wife's wardrobe," said the intruders with a provoking laugh; "you don't really suppose all those things belong to her; the old gentleman only hired them for the occasion, to make a show, and we are sent now to fetch them back." The bride, on being appealed to, was obliged to admit that all the men had said was true; and accordingly, they carried off the handsome furs, silks, jewels, and other valuable articles of a Russian trousseau in that class of life; while the husband betook himself in no good humour to his father-in-law to complain of his deceit, and to get the money which he had left in his charge. "What money?" said the old man, in pretended surprise. "Why," said the other, "the two hundred thousand roubles which you paid me yesterday as your daughter's dowry, and which I left in your care last night." "Ah!" said the father-in-law, laughing, "you can't pretend to be serious. I gave you the money yesterday to make a show before the company, and you gave it me back afterwards, as it was always understood between us that you should."

In vain the young man denied the assertion, and claimed the payment of the money, and the fulfilment of the contract; argument and entreaty proved alike useless, and he was obliged to go home with the satisfaction of having been cheated out of his wife's fortune, as well as her wardrobe, by her own father.

## LETTER XIII.

Winter quarters—Commencement of sledging—Arbozes—Projected railway—The conscription—Managed by a board—How constituted—Account of the system—What being enlisted means in Russia—Standard of height—How the conscripts are selected—On the estates of private individuals—On the estates of the crown—Oppressive circumstances occasionally arising—Age of conscripts—Substitutes—Penalty on the Board for enlisting an unfit man—Bribery—A sitting of the Board—Description of their proceedings—Examination of a conscript from a private estate—Meaning of *lop* and *zatillac*—A Crown peasant—Character of the scene—Attachment of the Russian to his family—Anecdote—Disposal of the recruits.

*Tamboff, December 16th, 1837.*

WE have now been settled for nearly three weeks in the town of Tamboff, where we are to spend the winter; and where all the families around are fast assembling. We have had an uninterrupted frost since the 16th of November, but no snow, beyond a mere sprinkling, fell until Sunday last, and even then the quantity was but moderate: it was, however, sufficient to allow of the use of sledges, a few of which were in motion, to the joy of their owners, before the ground was thoroughly white; and, by the following morning, the droschkas and tilègas had entirely dis-

appeared, and no wheeled vehicles were to be seen except a few gentlemen's carriages, which may be used in the streets of a town all winter.

Our English ideas of a heavy fall of snow are so closely connected with the notion of stage-coaches buried in drifts, mails due but not arrived, and parties imprisoned in country-houses, that it is a little difficult at first to enter into the feelings of the Russian, who looks forward to the same event as affording him means of traffic and communication, which he could not otherwise possess. The rise of the Nile is not more interesting or important to the Egyptian than is the establishment of the trainage or snow-roads to the Russian. If this period is delayed, the consequences are most injurious to the country, in the difficulty of transporting goods, and the general interruption to traffic.

The cross-roads, especially in this part of the country where, as I have already told you, there is no stone, become perfectly impassable before winter, being first cut into very deep ruts and holes during the wet weather of the autumn, and then frozen hard in this form. It may therefore be readily supposed how welcome is the snow which spreads a smooth covering over this broken surface, and enables traveller and merchandise to glide easily and swiftly to their destination, without risk or injury.

The internal commerce of Russia is carried on in a manner quite peculiar to the country. There are

no bulky stage-waggon, but all goods are transported in *tilègas*\* or sledges, according to the season, each vehicle being drawn in general by one horse. These travel in trains, which are called *arbozes*, and their traffic on the principal roads is very great, even in summer. As we came from Moscow to Tamboff, we were seldom half an hour without meeting or passing an *arboze*, the number of *tilègas* in each varying from fifteen or twenty, up to a hundred. In the winter, however, the trains are much more numerous,† from the increased facility of travelling and the consequent cheapness of conveyance. The average load for each sledge drawn by one horse, is, I am told, about seven hundred weight; the animals are, it must be remembered, in general small and weak.

Important as these *arbozes* are to the internal trade of Russia, they are the source of considerable inconvenience to the winter traveller. The horses are under little control from the small proportion of drivers,‡ so that the line which they keep is but irregular, and the sledges being on smooth wooden runners, are constantly sliding sideways, and it is often difficult to avoid coming in contact with them.

\* Small light waggon.

† I am credibly informed, that in the winter fifty thousand sledges come daily into Moscow, loaded with provisions and goods. The charge in the winter, for conveying goods from Tamboff to Moscow, a distance of about three hundred and sixty miles, was a rouble per pood, or one penny per three and a half pounds, nearly.

‡ The law requires that there should be at least one driver to every three *tilègas* or sledges, but it is not rigorously enforced.

All winter carriages and sledges, superior to those of the peasants, have narrow irons extending under their runners, and the sharp edges, like those of a skate, preserve them from slipping sideways. When the snow is deep, especially if the frost relaxes in severity, the constant passage of the arbozes wears it, as I am informed, into large holes four or five feet deep, which render travelling at that time most fatiguing and laborious, and not entirely free from danger.\*

The project is now under discussion, of a railway from Petersburg to Moscow: but it is difficult to suppose that this scheme can ever be executed, from the enormous expense of making and maintaining the road, and of establishing and keeping up steam-communication on a line of more than five hundred miles through a country, in which the absence of great commercial towns appears to forbid all hope of a reasonable profit. The Russians, however, value rapidity of locomotion beyond any other people, except perhaps the Americans, and as the country between Petersburg and Moscow certainly presents great facilities to the engineer from its level character, the government may perhaps hereafter be tempted to undertake a work which would enable them, if necessary, to convey troops from one capital to the other in thirty hours.

\* See account *infra*, of a winter journey which we afterwards made, and which enabled me to speak on this point from experience.



The conscription is now in active progress here, being managed by a Board, of which my brother-in-law, in his capacity of marshal of the nobility, is president: and as he is daily engaged for several hours in the discharge of this duty, it naturally forms a very frequent subject of conversation, the more so as I have felt much interested in obtaining some acquaintance with the system, and for this purpose I was present the other day for some time during a sitting of the board, in order to witness their proceedings. Before, however, I begin to describe them, I must give you a short general explanation of the whole system.

Every class of Russian subjects, except the nobles and the clergy, is required to furnish one recruit annually out of every four hundred males. It is found, however, more convenient that this visitation should fall upon each government or province only once in two years, when, of course, one man is called for out of every two hundred: and this year it is the turn of Tamboff and other governments in this part of the empire, to reinforce the armies of Russia.

To examine and enlist the conscripts, boards are appointed which sit from the 1st of November till the 31st of December, in the capital of each province and in some of the district towns. The board in the government town is composed of the vice-governor and some other functionaries, a medical man or two, a field-officer, and a subaltern, with a secretary and a

number of clerks. In the absence of the vice-governor, as is the case here at present, the marshal of the government, whose office I have described in a former letter, presides in his stead. The district boards are similarly constituted under the chairmanship of the marshal of the district. An aide-de-camp of the Emperor is always sent to see that the business is properly conducted, and that the different boards discharge their duty. He fixes his head-quarters in the government town, making occasional excursions into the districts, and in many respects exercising the same species of superintendence as that of an assistant poor-law commissioner over the proceedings of the boards of guardians within his district.

It is also the duty of the Imperial aide-de-camp, when the business of the conscription is closed, and the full complement of men has been enlisted, to inspect the whole body of recruits, to make a general report of the proceedings to the Emperor, and to select the finest looking men for service in the Guards.

To be made a soldier in Russia, implies being placed at the absolute disposal of the Emperor, to be employed either by sea or by land. All the sailors on board the men-of-war are soldiers, and are equipped and exercised as such. The apparent absurdity, which has often been noticed, of Russian naval captains wearing spurs as a part of their uniform, arises from

their being called upon, when on shore, to do duty as field-officers.

The minimum standard of height for the line is five feet three inches, and for the Guards five feet six: the conscript, when enlisted, must be between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, and he is not entitled to his discharge until he has served for twenty-five years. The wife of a soldier is free, and his children are the property of the crown, which educates the boys as soldiers, and places them in the ranks when old enough to serve.

The dread which the Russian peasant has of the conscription is not surprising, when the severity of military service and of military discipline in this country is borne in mind, and when we remember how completely every tie of family or affection is severed, every previous hope and prospect destroyed for the victims of this iron system. In fact, to make him a soldier is the most alarming and effectual threat which a Russian can hold out to the most vicious and refractory of his peasants, and the infliction of this dreaded punishment is reserved for the worst and the most incorrigible characters.

On the estates which belong to the crown, and which form nearly one-half of the landed property of the empire, the lot of furnishing a conscript falls upon each family in turn, according to the number of males of which it consists, and the selection is

made by the community of peasants themselves. The same rule holds with regard to the traders, but their numbers are so small in proportion to the peasants, that the ranks of the army may be considered as almost entirely filled by the latter class.

When the families who are to furnish recruits have been fixed upon by the community, their names are sent in to the board which I have mentioned, and it is the duty of the board, and the most troublesome part of its business, to ascertain that the choice is just and proper, by referring to the registers in which the names and ages of all the male peasants on the estate are inserted, and also by examining the parties themselves, and hearing all that they have to urge on their own behalf.

It not uncommonly happens that in a numerous family the sons are all too young, and that the father alone is capable of serving, while upon him the family depends for their maintenance; and when this occurs the case is truly pitiable, while, if the selection is just,\* the board have often no power to remedy the evil, or to refuse the conscript. When there are two or more brothers of the proper age and height, they either draw lots, or the father names which he pleases as the recruit.

Although no one can be compelled to serve until the age of twenty, young men, who are not less than

\* I must observe that it is a general instruction to the board to avoid ruining any family.

seventeen, and who are of the proper size, may be received, by their own consent, in the room of others.

Substitutes are occasionally purchased, and in this case a legal contract is drawn up beforehand, after entering into which, the substitute cannot flinch from his bargain; but before he is received as a soldier, the money, or whatever part of it remains due, must be paid to him in presence of the board, if he wishes a part to be given to any of his family, the person whom he names is immediately called in to receive it; and, finally, a statement of the whole transaction is entered on the minutes. To purchase a substitute costs sometimes not less than a hundred pounds; but the peasants on the crown estates are occasionally possessed of considerable wealth, and can afford to pay thus highly to be exempted from their turn of service.

The peasants belonging to the estates of private individuals afford, comparatively, little trouble to the board, since it has only to ascertain that the recruit is of the proper age and height, and physically qualified for service; it being the privilege of the proprietors to select any of their serfs whom they please as conscripts, and they naturally endeavour to pick out the worst characters and the most useless men for this purpose. If they have no one whom they wish to get rid of for misconduct, they generally make those families draw lots in which there are three or

four grown-up sons, and which, therefore can best spare one.

For every recruit who is received, and who afterwards proves to have been at the time of his enlistment unfit for service, owing to any physical defect, each member of the board is liable to a penalty of five hundred roubles, about twenty pounds.

Bribery often prevails to a great extent in the business of the recruitment; masters paying to have bad characters, who are unfit for soldiers, received; and conscripts who are fit, paying to be rejected. Clerks are sometimes detected in receiving from fifty to a hundred roubles from poor fellows for promised protection, which they have no power to give; and these gentlemen, if delivered over to justice, are punished by being made soldiers themselves. The doctor, too, in examining the conscripts, not unfrequently when he looks at their teeth, finds, not a silver spoon, but a gold piece in their mouths; this he, of course, is intended to take, and in return to pronounce the man unfit for service.

But the system of bribery is not always confined to these petty offences, the roubles are sometimes paid in thousands, and the receivers are neither the clerks nor the surgeons to the board. It is said, that the President, if he manages matters well, may clear, during the two months of the sitting, upwards of two thousand pounds; and when this is the case, of

course clerks receive their mites with impunity, and gold pieces are quietly transferred from the mouths of the conscripts to the pockets of the doctor, instead of being publicly laid on the table of the board, as happens almost daily here, under the vigilant eye of a president known to be incorruptible himself, and not inclined to overlook the delinquencies and peculations of others.

Having, as I have already told you, attended a sitting of the board of enlistment, I will endeavour to make you acquainted with their manner of proceeding, by giving you some description of the scene.

The members, with the doctors and the secretary, are all in uniform, and wear swords; the civil uniform differing little from the military, except in the absence of epaulettes. A standard measure, which can only be lowered to five feet three inches, is placed in the room, flanked on either side by a tall corporal.

The ante-room is crowded with peasants, and there are a certain number of soldiers and gens d'armes in attendance to keep order. I must premise, that when a man is received as a soldier, a patch is immediately shaved on his forehead to mark him: if he is rejected, a patch is shaved at the back of his neck to show that he has been examined, and to prevent his being brought forward a second time. At the conclusion of each day's sitting, the recruits, who have been enlisted, are marched in a body to a church,



where they take the oaths of allegiance and fidelity before a priest.

To return to the proceedings of the board,—we will suppose the business to begin with the examination of the conscripts furnished from the estate of a private individual.

At the president's order, one of the corporals in attendance opens the door into the ante-room, and calls out for the peasants of Ivan Petroitch Pashkoff to be in readiness: the president then reads out A. B., the first name on the list of conscripts sent by Mr. Pashkoff.

"A. B. come in," shouts the corporal, and in walks A. B., *stark naked*. He is first placed under the standard, the corporal on each side taking care that he holds himself upright, which of course he is not very willing to do.

"Five feet four inches,"\* says the corporal. The president enters the man's height opposite to his name in a book; the conscript is then handed over to the doctor who pronounces him sound and fit for service. The field officer then examines him, to ascertain that there is no peculiarity in his person, such as his being very much bandy-legged or knock-kneed, or having an extraordinarily shaped head, which would interfere with his wearing uniform.

\* This is expressed in Russian, in a manner which, if literally translated would be unintelligible in English. Five feet three inches, it will be remembered, is the minimum height for a soldier.

He pronounces his approval of the recruit; the president enters everything in his book, and simply calls out "*Lop*" (forehead): the corporal instantly shoves A. B. out of the room shouting "*Lop.*"—*Lop*, *Lop*, is repeated in the ante-room, and the man is taken straight into another apartment where his forehead is shaved, and he finds himself a soldier. In the meantime C. D. appears before the board: he is either too short, (if a sheet of paper can be passed between the man's head and the measure marking five feet three, he is rejected) or the doctor or inspecting officer find that he is physically unfit to be received. The president calls out "*zatillac*" (neck), C. D. is shoved out of the room, *zatillac*, *zatillac* is repeated in the ante-room, the back of the man's neck is shaved, and he is set at liberty. If a man declares himself labouring under any defect, or subject to any complaint unfitting him for a soldier, and the case is such that the truth cannot be ascertained on the spot, he is sent to the hospital for examination, and a report on his case is received the following day. Of course these poor men often counterfeit fits and other infirmities, in order to avoid being enlisted, but if they are discovered, they are liable to severe punishment, and their claim to a discharge after twenty-five years' service, is sometimes taken away.

When the turn of the crown peasants comes, three brothers perhaps enter together, one of whom is to

be selected. They are accompanied by their father and mother, and their wives and children, if they have any; decency being laid aside, for the three young men are *stark naked*. The board, after referring to the register, and hearing all that the men, as well as their father and mother have to urge in their excuse, decide that it is justly the turn of this family to furnish a conscript; the three brothers are therefore measured and examined, as in the case which I have described: and the result we will suppose is, that the eldest is tall and healthy, but he has a wife and three or four children; the second measures but five feet two inches; and the third brother is a fine tall lad of eighteen. Of the three, therefore, the youngest is under age, and the second is under size; they, therefore, are legally exempted from the conscription, and the eldest brother must be taken away from his wife and family and made a soldier, unless the lad of eighteen will voluntarily consent to serve in his stead.

A scene now ensues, which is at the same time both pathetic and ludicrous. The elder brother and his wife, the father and mother, and the little children, all throw themselves on the ground and prostrate themselves repeatedly at the feet of the young man, beseeching him to have pity on the family of his brother, and to consent to be enlisted in his place. The poor lad looks with a bewildered air from one to another, not exactly knowing what to do, having no

fancy to be a soldier, and unable to make up his mind to refuse. However, he is urged on every side, for the members of the board add their exhortations to the entreaties of his family, some bidding him be a good christian and sacrifice himself for his relations, and others encouraging him with the promise of good treatment in the army. At last, completely overpowered, he musters up courage, crosses himself, and consents to be a soldier.

The conscription frequently gives rise to most pitiable scenes, where married men, or the sons of widows or aged parents are torn away from families, of which they were the chief prop and stay. The recruits often cry and lament bitterly their hard lot when they come before the board to be examined; but the moment they are enlisted and their fate decided, they generally cheer up and recover their spirits, as if they thought it useless to grieve over what could no longer be remedied or avoided.

The Russian peasants are extremely attached to one another in their families, and it rarely happens that there is any difficulty in persuading a young man to devote himself for a relation; on the contrary, they often persist in doing so, to save an elder brother, or an uncle, against the advice of all around them. The other day a lad under twenty, whose married brother was nominated as a conscript, insisted upon coming here with him, in order, as he said, to see his fate. The man was accepted as a

recruit, and the father coming out, said to his younger son, who was waiting in the street, "they have taken your brother, Gabriel." Gabriel, without answering, rushed into the house, pressed through the crowd in attendance, and hurried, breathless, into the board-room, fearful of being too late to offer himself as a substitute for his married brother; he was, however, in good time, and being a fine young man, was of course readily received in the place of the other.

The recruits, after being sworn in, receive a great-coat and cap, a pair of boots, and some other necessities; and they are then quartered in barracks, detachments being occasionally draughted off from this to the neighbouring towns. Their beards are immediately removed, the moustaches alone being left; and in this severe weather it is quite pitiable to see the raw chins of these poor fellows, who have just been shaved for the first time in their lives.

## LETTER XIV.

Effects of charcoal vapour—The Russian stove—Colonel B—Warmth of houses—Fire-places—Death from charcoal vapour—Convicts on their way to Siberia—Rural police—Punishment of a peasant—Of a noble—The knout—Martial law—Running the gauntlet—Erroneous penal system—A General degraded to the ranks—Prevalence of bribery—A lucrative Government—Want of public opinion—Inadequacy of legitimate emoluments.

*Tamboff, December 23rd, 1837.*

IN my last letter, I told you that the Emperor always sent one of his aide-de-camps into each province, at the period of the recruitment. The officer, who is at present charged with this duty at Tamboff, and who, by-the-bye, has the good fortune to be full colonel at the age of thirty-two, nearly lost his life the other day in a most ignoble manner, namely, from the effects of charcoal vapour in his lodgings. Fatal accidents of this kind are not very uncommon in this country, arising either from ill-constructed stoves, or from carelessness in those who have the charge of them.

The Russian stove is a sort of oven with a flue which can be opened or closed at pleasure, and with

valves to pour the warm air into the room which is to be heated. The fire is made entirely with wood, and when it is lighted, the flue of course is opened and the valves are closed; the fuel, as it burns out, is beaten small, and when it is entirely reduced to ashes, and all flame and smoke have quite disappeared, the flue is stopped, a handful of salt being first thrown on the cinders, and in a couple of hours afterwards the valves may be opened and the hot air allowed to circulate. If, however, the smallest bit of wood remains smouldering, after the chimney has been closed, the poisonous vapour from the charcoal penetrates into the rooms. Its presence is easily detected from its smell, especially by those who enter from the open air; sometimes, however, the first intimation which those who are in the apartments have of the existence of vapour is given by a sudden and racking head-ache, which is followed in time by stupor, and inability to move: if the vapour has been breathed for some time before it is detected, its effects are often felt for several days afterwards.

Colonel B—, (the mention of whose case introduced this subject,) had lain down to sleep on a sofa after dinner; his servant awoke him, according to orders, at five o'clock, and he immediately got up, and as instantly fell flat on the floor; he did not hurt himself this time, but he felt a strange confusion in his head, and, as he says, hardly knew where he was. He managed to get on his legs, but he immediately



fell again, and rising up a second time and endeavouring to make his way to the door, he called out to his servant, who fortunately heard him and came to his master's assistance: not, however, until he had fallen down a third time and cut his face severely against the sharp corner of the door. A doctor was immediately sent for, who at once discovered the cause of the attack in the presence of charcoal vapour. He bathed his patient's head with spirits of wine, eau de Cologne, &c., and as soon as he recovered himself a little, sent him out in an open carriage, and made him drive about for a considerable time for the sake of air: he was, however, very unwell for some days, and his face is considerably marked by the bruises he sustained in his fall.

As soon as vapour is detected, the windows should be thrown open, and the rooms fumigated with burnt vinegar, the flue of the stove being of course at the same time unclosed.

When the stove, or *peech*, as it is called in Russian, is badly constructed, no care can preserve the rooms from vapour; since, in this case, the hot air, which, for some time after stopping the flue, is always pernicious, will find its way out, even before the valves are opened.

If it were not for the danger attending them, which exists chiefly in lodgings and other inferior houses, where small pains are taken in their construction, these Russian *peeches* would be most excellent

inventions, as they consume but little fuel, only requiring a fire to be kept up for about an hour every day, while the heat which they produce can be regulated at pleasure. The rooms are free from draughts, and all parts of the house are equally well warmed; there are no cold entrances or passages, and since the heat is retained all night, no cold room to dress in, on getting up in the morning.

The houses are in general thoroughly warm all winter, that is to say, from the beginning of October till April or May, because the stoves are regularly heated, and the double windows exclude entirely the outward air; a single pane, called a *forteshka* being left to open for the purposes of ventilation.

It is, however, in the chilly evenings or rainy days of summer, that one sits shivering in a Russian house, if it does not boast of open fire-places as well as stoves. Fire-places are daily increasing in fashion, and there are few good houses without them; they are not, however, by any means universal, and are regarded quite as luxuries, though they really make the greatest possible difference in the comfort and wholesomeness of the rooms where they are found. Without fire-places, the houses are constantly damp and chilly in summer, excepting in very hot weather, and there are no means of lighting an impromptu fire on a cold evening, since a *peeck* requires some hours before its good effects are felt.

As for the peasants' houses, these are kept nearly

all the year round at the temperature of an oven; and the people are so inured, from childhood, to an atmosphere impregnated with charcoal vapour, that in general they feel no inconvenience from it, though of course they are not proof against its fatal effects when in overpowering quantities. Unhappily, a man and a boy, on my brother-in-law's estate, have, within the last month, fallen victims to this subtle poison from their own imprudence: they went, in spite of prohibition and caution, to enjoy the warmth of a stove which had been lighted to dry corn; they soon fell asleep, and they never woke.

Tamboff lies on the high road from Moscow into Siberia, and we see almost every week convicts passing through on their way thither. They travel on foot; some coupled together with handcuffs, and all with chains on their legs. They are guarded by foot-soldiers with loaded muskets, accompanied, according to a new regulation, by two or three mounted Cossacks armed with lances. They march about twelve miles a day, there being at that distance apart all along the road, places of security in which they are lodged at night. The party, which consists on an average of about twenty prisoners, and eight or ten soldiers, is usually followed by two or three *tilègas* or sledges to convey those who may fall sick or lame upon the road; or to carry baggage.

The prisoners are always well wrapped up in

sheepskin coats, and warm caps : the soldiers in their dirty great coats, with a loose collar of cloth or fur to protect their ears, look not very unlike ancient London watchmen. The female convicts travel in separate gangs in the same way as the men.

I have never seen any prisoners who appeared to be other than ordinary ruffians, but state-criminals of the highest distinction are usually treated in the same way, and are compelled to travel in the same wearisome and painful manner into Siberia. As to the treatment of the convicts on the journey, it is said that they are better fed than the soldiers who guard them.

In trivial matters the police of Russia in the rural districts is chiefly maintained by the proprietors, each keeping order on his own estate. There are, however, magistrates called *ispravniks*, who are elected by the nobles from among themselves, and whose authority corresponds in some measure to that of an English justice of the peace. The *ispravnik* has a number of subordinates, who act as constables, under his orders, and he fulfils in the country the duties which in towns are discharged by the Master of police.

The authority of masters over their serfs, and their power of punishing and maltreating them is restrained by law ; but laws which defend the weak against the strong are not always enforced, and, practically speaking, I believe that the power which

the master is able to exercise in remote parts of the empire may be looked upon as nearly uncontrolled. The slave may complain, but his master is the friend of the *ispravnik* or some other authority, or a few hundred roubles thrown into the scale of justice destroy its balance: and where is the unfortunate peasant to obtain redress? When a peasant is convicted by law of an offence, he is usually flogged, or for more serious crimes made a soldier, or sent to Siberia, after in general receiving the *knout*.\* There is a great difference according to his crime in his fate when he reaches the place of his destination in Siberia. In some cases, he is in the comparatively easy position of a colonist, under the surveillance of the police; while in others he is compelled to labour in the mines, and is treated with the utmost severity as a convict in a penal settlement.

The treatment of a noble when convicted of a crime is only different from that of a peasant in that he is exempt from corporal punishment. He is, however, degraded from his nobility if sentenced to Siberia, or made a soldier, and he enjoys none of the privileges of his class for the future. A total forfeiture of property accompanies the loss of nobility.

It is well known that there is no capital punishment in the Russian code, but the leniency of the

\* The pronounciation of the *k* in this word is very strongly marked; the *ou* is pronounced as in French.

law is sometimes evaded in practice. The *knout* is inflicted, excepting on nobles, for all grave offences; in cases of murder or other heinous crimes, "*without mercy*" is marked on the sentence, and in this case the punishment is often death, although more than twenty-five cuts cannot be inflicted. It is said that there are executioners so terribly skilful, that in three cuts of the knout they can destroy life.

Nothing surely can be said in defence of a system which thus inflicts a death of torture without the sanction of law, but by a subterfuge; and as if it were an accident. Such a system exactly opposes itself to the only sound principle of penal legislation, namely, that the punishment should be so contrived as to strike the greatest possible terror into others, at the expense of the smallest possible amount of suffering to the criminal himself; here, on the contrary, legal punishment is degraded into revenge.

In the martial law of Russia a similar practice exists, though I am not sure that capital punishment is altogether excluded from the code even in time of peace. A soldier was lately tried at a garrison in this province for running his officer through with a bayonet. The sentence was, that he should run the gauntlet four times through a thousand men, *without going to the hospital*. The addition of this last clause implied that the soldier was to be flogged to death. In ordinary cases such a punishment is inflicted at different times, the culprit being sent in

the intervals to the hospital, and a surgeon being at each time in attendance to see that his life is not endangered. The compelling a man to run the gauntlet is, I believe, not an unusual punishment in the Russian army. The troops form a lane, up which the criminal passes, with a soldier before and another behind him to regulate his march. Each man in the line is armed with a stick, with which he is obliged to give the prisoner a blow as he passes, under penalty of severe punishment himself if he neglects to do so. When a prisoner who *is not to go to the hospital* can no longer walk, he is placed on a cart, and the punishment is continued till he dies, for it is hardly possible that he can survive till its completion.

A most erroneous part of the Russian penal system appears to be that of sentencing civil offenders of all kinds to serve as soldiers. If a steward cheats, or a servant robs his master, he is made a soldier; if a coachman drives over a person in the street, he is seized by the police and made a soldier;\* and if his master embezzles money, or takes a bribe, and is detected, he also is made a soldier.

It is the great object of the Russian government to encourage and uphold the army; yet its ranks are

\* The law in this case is most severe, and often extremely oppressive and unjust. If a carriage is driven over any person and hurts him, whatever may be the merits of the case, the horses are forfeited to the Crown, and the coachman, if a Russian peasant, is sentenced to be a soldier.



daily swelled with thieves, vagabonds and drunkards the soldiers can feel little respect for themselves, and their respect for their officers must be diminished, when the general who commands them to-day, may, for some breach of duty or disobedience to his superior, bear a musket in the ranks to-morrow. An occurrence of this sort, though naturally not very common, is by no means unheard of.

Some years ago a general who was in high favour with the Emperor, and who held an office of importance, received an Ukase or Imperial order which nearly affected an intimate friend. From a regard to his friend, instead of executing the Ukase, he put it in his pocket, and allowed a month to pass without taking the steps which his duty required. For this offence he was tried and found guilty, and the following sentence was pronounced and executed:—he was brought in full uniform, with his stars and other decorations, into a room where the ordinary business (as I described it in my last letter) of receiving conscripts was going on. He was then stripped; put, according to the usual form, under the standard; his height noted down; his forehead ordered to be shaved, and he was taken out of the room a common soldier, and I believe sent to Siberia.

Those who are thus condemned to serve as soldiers are not altogether placed on the same footing as the ordinary conscripts; they are not entitled to their

discharge at the end of twenty-five years, and they are, if their offences have been serious, sent into a penal corps; but still, to be made a soldier generally implies disgrace and punishment; and it may be doubtful whether, with an army constituted as this is, much reliance could be placed on its zeal and fidelity in the case of internal disturbances.

The national disgrace of Russia appears to be the system of corruption which it is said pervades every class in the empire, high and low. This accusation is, I am afraid, undeniable; for every Russian will tell you, "there is nothing to be done in our country without a bribe." The only difference appears to be in the amount, which, of course, varies with the rank of the receiver. At the bottom of the ladder, three or four roubles may suffice, while as many thousands may be requisite for the important personage at the top.

No one will be unjust enough to suppose that honest men are not to be found here as well as in other countries, and I should be sorry so far to calumniate Russia as to suggest that they were rare; but still from all that I have heard in various quarters, I cannot doubt of the lamentable prevalence of corruption. The fact of a person in a high and honourable employment, receiving money for his good offices, does not seem to be regarded here with all the horror and detestation which it deserves.

The salary of a governor of a province is twelve thousand roubles a-year, or about five hundred pounds, a sum which is quite insufficient to cover the expences of his establishment; yet I was told the other day that a governor of Saratoff, on the Volga, one of the richest provinces in Russia, retired some years ago, after holding the office for six years, with a capital, realized during that time, of three millions of roubles, about a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. I inquired how this was possible, and the following is, in substance, the explanation which I received.

This upright Governor never committed acts of private injustice or wrong; but for value received, he consented to shut his eyes and not interfere with the doings of others. He, in fact, sold his protection wholesale to those who made their own profit by retailing their good offices as required.

In each of the *twelve* districts of every government is an *ispravnik*, an officer whom I have already mentioned as a rural master of police. *Each ispravnik* paid his Excellency five thousand roubles a-year, a douceur which of course obliterated any little peccadilloes of his own, or any mistakes into which he might fall in administering justice.

The Bashkirs, and other wild tribes who dwell in the Steppes beyond the Volga, wished to remain in undisturbed possession of lands to which they had no very strict title: the Governor left them in repose,

and his annual revenue was increased by thirty or forty thousand roubles.

The province abounded in heretics, of a sect regarded with much jealousy by government, and much persecuted for their political rather than their religious opinions: these sectarians longed for peace and quiet, and the price of the Governor's toleration was from one to two hundred thousand roubles a-year.

Certain salt-works at Saratoff, which supply all Russia with that article, contributed their mite to the pocket of his Excellency, which was swelled from numerous other sources not included in this catalogue.

It is not every one who is so successful in enriching himself as was this Governor, but he was no extraordinary instance of rapacity; he merely turned to good account the opportunities which he enjoyed. I was assured that he left a good character behind him, and was much regretted in the province.

In these cases of venality it is not the question here, what will the world think of such a man, and where will he again venture to show his face? But it is demanded instead, will he be able to justify himself in higher quarters, will he maintain his credit with the minister or with his Majesty? If he can succeed in so doing, he will laugh at the rest of the world, and there will be no blot on his escutcheon: there are no public prints to expose him to opprobrium,

and indeed so low is the standard of public virtue, that his conduct is hardly regarded as disgraceful, and it would almost be considered a piece of Quixotism to set up as the censor of one who had only acted as many others would have done in his place.

The Emperor, I believe, does all in his power to check and discourage this disgraceful system of corruption, by visiting offenders with the utmost severity: it is not, however, probable that it can be effectually destroyed, so long as the sources exist out of which it naturally arises. These appear chiefly to be the inadequacy of the legitimate emoluments attached to every office and employment, and the total absence of public opinion in Russia.

The former of these causes renders a man needy and liable to temptation, and the latter secures him from the disgrace which ought to be the severest punishment of his misconduct.

## LETTER XV.

Belief in powers of images and saints—Madame B.—A *maigre* dinner—The Archbishop of Tamboff—Variety of dishes—A toast—Dinner visits.

*Tamboff, December 27th, 1837.*

I BELIEVE I told you in a former letter that the upper classes of Russians in general were by no means exact in their observance of the fasts of the church: there are, however, many ladies who are extremely rigid in this respect. Here there is one lady in particular, who in her attention to all such points is undeviating, and who in her professed belief in the miraculous powers of images, saints, and reliques, reminds me of the characters which are described as those of zealous Roman Catholics in the dark ages, but which I scarcely could have supposed were to be met with in real life in the nineteenth century.

This lady having a daughter unwell a few years ago, dreamed that a monk came to her and told her that if she took her child to the shrine of a certain saint at Veronish, a town at no very great distance

from Tamboff, she would be cured. Madame B., for so we will call her, of course followed the advice of her nocturnal counsellor, and the young lady having, after the pilgrimage to Veronish, in due time recovered her health, her restoration was of course attributed to the miraculous interference of the saint; and her mother, out of gratitude for the cure, made a vow to live for the rest of her life as a nun, that is to say, to eat only fish, vegetables, &c., and never to touch meat. She had a picture of the saint copied to serve as an *image* for her private room, and she declares that by putting a piece of the paper, in which this holy portrait was wrapped, under her pillow at night, she was lately cured of a violent head-ache. She is, however, a firm believer in charms of all kinds; the other day I saw her produce, out of a pile of recipes for the cure of colds, coughs, sore-throats, and so forth, a slip of paper, which she said contained an excellent remedy for the bite of a mad-dog, and that extraordinary as we might think it, she herself had witnessed its good effects. In one corner were written three short words, which she said must be copied on little bits of paper, and the latter then rolled up into the form of pills, three of which were to be swallowed daily for the space of nine days.

I might fill my letter with stories of this good lady's superstition and credulity: but without taking up more time or paper, I think I have said enough to



give you some idea of her character, which is not quite so uncommon here as it would be with us, though of course she must be rather remarkable in any part of the world. She spends large sums of money in presents to the church, and especially to the Archbishop of Tamboff, a prelate extremely polite to the fair sex in general, and whom she professes to regard as a perfect saint. Among other testimonials of her esteem and respect, the Archbishop has four beautiful grey carriage horses, the gift of this devout lady, who is deservedly high in favour with his Eminence.

A few days ago Madame B. gave him a grand dinner to celebrate the consecration of a new altar in a church; she was kind enough to invite us to the party; and you will perhaps be amused by a short description of the entertainment.

As we were then in the middle of the six weeks' fast preceding Christmas, the dinner could not be otherwise than *maigre* in the presence of the Archbishop, and the invitation to us was accompanied by an explanation of this circumstance, which it is supposed would not be agreeable to foreigners. Independently, however, of the novelty of the whole thing, we deserved no commiseration for the fast; since had I not known the contrary, I should have supposed we were celebrating a feast.

We went to Madame B—'s house about half-past two, and found the Archbishop, and a good many of the guests already assembled. Every body

on entering the room walked up to his Eminence, and kissed his hand, receiving his blessing; we of course avoided this ceremony. He is a strong, harsh-featured man of about forty, with no great expression of dignity in his countenance, which is, however, grave and calm. He was dressed in a long robe, or caftan of dark brown flowered satin, with large sleeves, displaying an under-dress of pale green silk. He was decorated with the red ribbon, cross, and star of St. Anne, and on his breast hung a miniature image, set in diamonds; in his hand he held a rosary of white beads; and on his head he wore the usual monk's cap of black velvet, made like a hat without a rim, and with a hood hanging down behind. The whole party amounted to twenty-nine, among them were several priests, and one monk, who of course were in attendance on their superior. When dinner was announced, the Archbishop led the procession into the dining-room, walking alone at the head of the guests: the choristers of his convent were placed in a gallery, and they sung a prayer before we sat down, and several hymns at intervals during dinner: they were, however, rather nearer to us than they should have been, and their voices, adapted to a church, were too loud for the room. The dinner, which consisted entirely of fish and vegetables under various forms, was most *recherché*, and served in excellent style; but the number of dishes, between the *sterlet* soup which began the repast, and the ice

which ushered in the dessert, was so great, that although each was handed round in duplicate, we were nearly three hours at table, and I could not help asking my next neighbour, as the variety of good things appeared interminable,—how many were necessary in Russia to constitute a fast dinner? he replied as many as possible. Wine of every kind appeared in turn, and in short the object seemed to be that of showing how luxuriously people might fare without the use of meat, and the whole thing amounted to a practical satire on the Russian system of fasting.

Towards the conclusion of dinner, while the servants were handing round champagne, a burly deacon, who was seated near the bottom of the table, rose from his seat, and placed himself before the image in the corner of the room. I could not at all understand what he was about, but I thought that he was appointed to say grace after dinner, and that he had rather mistaken his time. However, he kept looking over his shoulder, his back being turned to the table, and was evidently waiting for a signal, which at last he apparently received, for all of a sudden he opened his mouth, and thundered forth a chaunt, while in an instant the whole party, excepting the archbishop, rose to their feet, and I was utterly at a loss to comprehend the scene.

On the one side I saw the deacon singing with the voice of a stentor, and bowing and crossing

himself before the image; and I might have supposed myself in a church. If I looked the other way, there were the guests standing up on both sides of the table, each with a bumper of champagne in his right hand; it appeared a convivial party, where a popular toast was to be welcomed with three times three. This incongruous spectacle lasted for two or three minutes, when the chaunt ceased, and we all resumed our seats. I then asked my neighbour, who was somewhat amused at my surprise, what all this meant, and he told me we had only been drinking with the usual forms the health of the prelate at the top of the table.

I am very glad to have had an opportunity of witnessing an entertainment of this kind, as it is not an every-day occurrence; and much of it was both new to me and strongly characteristic of Russian manners and customs. In general, however, it must be owned that a set-dinner at three o'clock is not a thing to be desired, as it breaks up the day, and the whole affair is generally over, and the house clear of guests by five o'clock, just as the ice might otherwise begin to thaw and the society become animated. At dinner the two sexes are carefully separated, the ladies sitting on one side of the table and the gentlemen on the other, as if they were afraid of one another. In consequence of which gothic arrangement, the conversation at table is apt to be peculiarly dull and

languid. Sometimes the master of the house, instead of sitting down with his guests, spends the whole time of dinner in walking about from one to another, and seeing that the servants are alert in attending to or anticipating their wishes; this, however, is an antiquated notion of hospitality which is now almost obsolete.

## LETTER XVI.

Severity of Frost—Frost-bites—Snow Storms in the Steppes—Panic—Destruction of the Winter Palace by Fire—Conduct of the Emperor and Empress—Anecdote—Washerwomen in Winter—Sentinels—Christmas Gaieties—Mode of issuing Invitations—Morning calls—Ladies' dress—Evening parties—Room for improvement—Separation of the sexes in society—Secret Police—Count Benkendorf—National reserve—Remarkable occurrence at a Masquerade.

*Tamboff, January 16th, 1837.*

THE frost has now lasted for two months without interruption, and the winter is considered very severe even in Russia. We have frequently had twenty-four or five, and sometimes, thirty degrees of cold by Reaumur; and the intensity of this cold has been often increased by wind; for twenty degrees of frost on a still day are more supportable than ten with a wind. The difficulty in going out is to preserve the face, especially the nose and forehead from being frost-bitten or rather frozen. When this misfortune occurs no pain is felt, but the part affected becomes hard and white;\* it is easily cured at first

\* A stranger will often stop a person in the street to tell him that his nose or his cheek is frozen.

by rubbing the skin with snow till the circulation is restored; but if it is neglected, the effects of the frost are very painful, and sometimes a wound ensues which may end in mortification. If the skin is blistered, the application of goose-oil is considered an excellent remedy. Four years ago, I am told, that more than five hundred persons were frozen to death in this government, which, it must be remembered, consists chiefly of open steppes, where the effects of a high wind are most formidable, since the snow is blown from the ground and buries horse and man in the drifts, or else it obliterates the tracks, so that the traveller loses his way, and almost inevitably perishes on the unsheltered plain. From the scarcity of wood on these steppes, the inhabitants have little fuel, except straw and dried cow-dung; the latter, it is said, makes a very hot fire, and if properly managed, is entirely free from any unpleasant smell when burning. In the severe winter which I have mentioned of 1833-4, a complete panic was excited, and a prophecy was spread abroad which gained credit, not only with the common people, but with some of a higher class, that on the first day of the new year there would be a hundred-and-ninety degrees of frost, and, of course, that man and beast would perish.

The papers have, no doubt, made you acquainted with the misfortune which has occurred at Peters-



burg in the destruction of the magnificent Winter-Palace, which was burnt to the ground\* on the night of the 29th of December. Various reports have been spread as to the origin of the fire: it has been hinted that it was not altogether accidental, and that the authors of the calamity are no other than conspirators against the existing government. All such rumours, however, appear to be utterly groundless, and it seems that the fire undoubtedly originated in want of precaution on the part of those who were charged with the care of the stoves, some of which were out of order, so as to ignite the adjoining wood-work. This it is supposed had been smouldering for a day or two; and it is even said that a smell of burning had been perceived, and yet that no precautions were taken. Be this as it may, the fire broke out on the night which I have mentioned, while the Emperor and Empress with their grown-up children were at the theatre where Taglioni was dancing. A messenger was immediately sent to the Emperor, who left the theatre without alarming the Empress, under the pretence that a courier had arrived with dispatches for his own hand.

¶ He found that the young Grand Dukes had been already taken out of the palace and placed in a car-

\* I found afterwards that this statement was not quite correct. The walls of the palace, from their great thickness and solidity, remained almost uninjured by the fire.

riage to await his directions: the valuable jewels had also been removed to a place of security: his Majesty therefore proceeded to his own private apartments, and with the assistance of his valet-de-chambre, packed up and secured his private papers, and when he had completed this important task, he sent to inform the Empress of the disaster. She immediately came to the palace, and after directing the removal from her own apartments of those articles which she prized most, and personally ascertaining the safety of all the ladies attached to the court, some of whom were saved not without difficulty, she went to the house of Count Nesselrode, on the opposite side of the Imperial place or square, and established herself at one of the windows, where she remained for two hours watching the progress of the fire, which gained ground rapidly, since, owing to the intense frost, (twenty-six or twenty-seven degrees of Reaumur,) the engines were useless for want of water. The flames continued to rage all night, and the loss is estimated at more than a million of pounds sterling. A considerable part of the magnificent furniture was saved, with most of the pictures and valuable curiosities. More might have been rescued from the fire, but as it spread, the Emperor forbade all further exertions, on account of the danger. The soldiers, however, who were engaged in removing the furniture, were so eager, that it was difficult to restrain them, and even the Emperor himself, as it is said,

had some trouble in enforcing obedience when he commanded them to desist. The following anecdote\* is told of his Majesty's presence of mind on the occasion. Some soldiers were busily employed in taking down a magnificent mirror which stood opposite to a door: the Emperor was in the adjoining room, and looking through the doorway, saw that the cieling was cracking over the heads of the men. He called to them to desist and come out of the room, they, however, were so eagerly engaged in their work that they did not immediately obey, and the Emperor, perceiving that no time was to be lost, threw his opera-glass, with all his force, at the mirror, and broke it in the middle; and the soldiers perceiving it to be spoiled, though they scarcely knew how, gave themselves no further trouble about it, but left the room, the cieling of which fell in a few minutes afterwards. I, myself, think his Majesty is quite as likely to have aimed at the men's heads as at the mirror, by way of effectually exciting their attention; but whether I am right in my conjecture, or the more courtly version of the story is true, he undoubtedly appears to have saved the lives of the party by the expedient which he adopted. The palace was inhabited by fifteen or sixteen hundred souls, but I be-

\* I find that this anecdote is given by Lord Londonderry in his account of his visit to Petersburg and Moscow; I have, however, not thought it worth while to expunge it from my letter, since I heard it at the time, and on authority which I could not doubt.

lieve no lives were lost in the fire excepting those of four or five soldiers, who perished in the White Hall, from the roof falling in upon them.

Of all those who are exposed to the severity of a Russian winter, the washerwomen always appear to me most deserving of pity. They may be seen, daily, in numbers, washing clothes in the river at holes cut in the ice, rinsing the linen in the water, and then laying it on the ice and striking it with a wooden beetle, instead of wringing it. The linen is taken down to the river and conveyed home again on small sledges, which the women draw after them. These women, and, indeed, the female peasants in general, are dressed, in the winter, almost like the men, in sheep-skin coats and high boots reaching to the knee, with their heads wrapped up in handkerchiefs: the hands, however, of the washerwomen are necessarily undefended, and it surprises me that they can preserve the use of them, when they are wet and then exposed to the intense frost. The sentinels, at this season, in addition to their great-coats, have large sheep-skin pelisses or wrappers, which cover them completely, warm gloves, goloshes lined with fur, and cloth skull-caps, protecting the ears and the back of the head and neck, worn under the shako.

Since Christmas we have had a rapid succession of assemblies, balls and parties of various kinds; and coachmen and horses have been forced to brave the cold without, while their masters and mistresses were

amusing themselves in warm rooms within. The horses, however, are protected by their own hardy nature and rough coats, and their drivers are wrapped up in furs and sheep-skins, so as almost to bid defiance to the frost. Nevertheless, in Petersburg and Moscow, all places of public amusement are closed, from humanity to man and beast, when the cold reaches a certain point, (I think twenty degrees of Reaumur,) and court festivities, under the same circumstances, are postponed.

It is not the fashion here for entertainers to issue cards of invitation, or to engage their guests long beforehand: instead of this, a lady, who intends to give a ball or party, is obliged to go round the town, and invite all the ladies in person, generally for the next day or the next but one, leaving merely a message for those whom she does not find at home: her husband follows her in her circuit, at a short interval, to invite the gentlemen in each family, since they might feel themselves slighted were this ceremony omitted. These calls sometimes begin as early as nine o'clock in the morning, and we often find cards on the breakfast table, which have been left before we were up.

About Christmas and the new year the people here appear to spend most of their time in hurrying from house to house, and paying a flying visit or leaving a card; as custom requires that on one, if not both of these occasions, they should take the

trouble of calling on all their acquaintances with congratulations. On Christmas-day, my brother-in-law was too unwell to admit visitors, and eighty-two cards were left at his house in the course of the morning; on new year's day, he devoted himself to the task of politeness in return, and he tells me, that before he came home, he had called at fifty houses in person.

The ladies are in general very well dressed *when they appear in public*;\* indeed their toilettes must be the source of no inconsiderable expense, since it seems to be held necessary that no lady should appear in the same dress at two balls in the course of the winter; and in so small a society as this, no one can hope to break through this rule without instant detection on the part of her rivals in elegance. Ladies of moderate fortune in Russia possess, generally speaking, more jewels than English women in similar circumstances. A valuable shawl, and diamonds to a certain amount, are considered, I believe, indispensable requisites in the list of marriage presents from every husband to his bride.

At the balls and evening parties, trays loaded with bonbons, apples, grapes, and sweetmeats are handed round in great abundance: I should, however, have formed a higher opinion of the refinement of the society, had they contented themselves

\* I am afraid they do not always deserve to be commended for personal neatness at home.

with the ices which are also served in profusion. Ladies, ornamented with diamonds, certainly do not appear to advantage when munching unpeeled apples in a ball-room; nor does it add to the dignity of Generals, decorated with stars, to stuff their pockets with bonbons, and carry them away. No plates are provided for the guests, and, therefore, the floor of the room is quickly strewed with the papers, in which bonbons have been wrapped, while apple-cores and grape-skins are thrown without compunction under the chairs. The sweetmeats are brought in large saucers, with two or three spoons *pro bono publico*; for the guests are expected, after putting a spoon in their mouths to restore it to the saucer for the benefit of their neighbour. In some houses, instead of laying cloths for supper, the plates are set down on the naked card-tables, scrawled all over with chalk, from the Russian fashion, which I have mentioned of marking in this manner the state of the game. The suppers are generally very good, but they seldom make their appearance till two o'clock in the morning, an hour perfectly inconsistent with the custom of dining at three in the afternoon; but Russians have the habit very commonly of quitting the house where they are entertained the moment they rise from table, whether late or early; and the late supper is arranged with the hospitable intention of enjoying the company of the guests as long as possible.

I observe that the matrons are always in much



greater request here in society, than the young ladies; for Russian notions impose upon the latter so much restraint, that it really is difficult to keep up a conversation with them: they can hardly be induced to say more than "yes" or "no," and the unmarried men are absolutely afraid of them; since if they pay any young lady half the ordinary attentions, which, according to our ideas, common politeness would appear to exact, it would be at once supposed that they meant to offer their hands. I often felt a great degree of pity at seeing a knot of girls huddled together in a room like a flock of lambs, who saw wolves prowling around them, and seated at supper always like a set of children, at a separate table, without a single partner to enliven them, while the young men looked equally dull, collected in other quarters.

It must be confessed that an animated conversation is much more rare and more difficult to maintain in Russia than in England. The Censorship, as I have already remarked, places a great restraint upon literature; and there are few subjects of general interest, since political topics are entirely banished, and no one likes, in general society, to hazard the most indifferent remark on any act of Government; which is said, with what truth I, of course, cannot tell, to have active spies in every quarter: at all events, there are in every town officers of *gens-d'armes*, or, as they are often called, *the secret police*, part of

whose duty avowedly is to report to St. Petersburg all that is passing around them, even, as I am told, to the merest gossip. Count Benkendorf is at the head of this body; and all persons unite in declaring that nothing could render so odious a system tolerable, but the manner in which it is organised by its present Chief, who has succeeded in acquiring much popularity in spite of his unpleasant office.

So strongly is the habit of prudent reserve imprinted on the minds of Russians, that their natural curiosity and desire for information often seems to be stifled, and it is difficult to excite their interest in any public event. On the evening after the arrival of the post, which brought intelligence of the Winter Palace having been burned, we happened to be at a small party, consisting of less than a dozen people, one of whom had received a letter from a friend at Petersburg, giving him an account of what had occurred; as no public papers had arrived that day, it would have been natural for this gentleman to impart his correspondent's information, and to tell us all he knew about an event of such general interest. Instead of this, however, small and private as the society was, it was merely mentioned in the room that a report had arrived of a serious fire at the palace; and no one would at all enter upon the subject.\* The fact, I suppose, was, that silence was the

\* I have since been informed that the Emperor caused it to be understood at Petersburg, that the subject of the fire was not agree-

safe course, and that no one liked to be the first to bruit about the news of such a disaster. When the newspapers arrived, they merely stated in a short paragraph, that the palace had unfortunately been destroyed by fire; they entered into no details, and only made their account of the misfortune the vehicle for a little flattery of the Emperor and the Imperial family.

I will conclude my letter with the account which I heard lately of a most extraordinary occurrence which took place three years ago at Petersburg. Incredible as the story appears, I am assured, not only by the narrator, but by other people, that it is undoubtedly true.

About Christmas, masquerades are much in vogue in Russia, and even when an ordinary ball is given at this season, it is not unusual to place candles in the windows of the house as a signal that masks are admitted without invitation.

At the period to which this story refers, namely, the Christmas of 1834, a ball was given at a house at Petersburg, which was mentioned, but I have forgotten the name of the owner, and the ordinary signal was displayed for the admission of masks, several of whom arrived in the course of the evening, staid a short time as usual, and departed.

At length a party entered, dressed as Chinese,

able to him, and that the less it was discussed in society, the better he should be pleased.

and bearing on a palanquin a person whom they called their chief, saying that it was his fête-day. They set him down very respectfully in the middle of the room, and commenced dancing what they said was their national dance around him. When this was concluded, they separated, and mingled with the general company, speaking French very well, and making themselves extremely agreeable. After a while they began gradually to disappear unnoticed, slipping out of the room one or two at a time, till at last they were all gone, leaving their chief still sitting motionless in dignified silence in his palanquin in the middle of the room. The ball began to thin, and the attention of those who remained was wholly drawn to the grave figure of the Chinese mask.

The master of the house at length went up to him, and told him that his companions were all gone, politely begging him to take off his mask, that he and his guests might know to whom they were indebted for all the pleasure which the exhibition had afforded them. The Chinese, however, gave no reply by word or sign, and a feeling of uneasy curiosity gradually drew around him the guests who remained in the ball-room. The silent figure still took no notice of all that was passing around him, and the master of the house at length with his own hand took off the mask, and discovered to the horrified by-standers the face of a corpse.

The police were immediately sent for, and on a

surgical examination of the body, it appeared to be that of a man who had been strangled a few hours before. Nothing, however, could be discovered either at the time or afterwards which could lead to the identity of the murdered man, or the discovery of the actors in this extraordinary scene: it was found on enquiry that they arrived at the house where they deposited the dead body in a handsome equipage with masked servants.

If this story be true, as I am positively assured it is, the method by which the murderers disposed of the remains of their victim is certainly the most unaccountable which was ever planned or executed by human ingenuity. It is supposed to have been, in some way or other, the denouement of a gambling transaction.

## LETTER XVII.

The pleasures of sledging rather exaggerated—A *vasok*—A *kibitka*—Cheapness of travelling—A fellow-countryman—An adventure which befell him at Moscow—Character of sledge-drivers—A General and a jeweller—A Polish swindler of the fair sex.

*Tamboff, February 2nd, 1838.*

THE delights of sledging have always been cried up to me in the most exalted terms since I have been in this country, and no doubt it is an excellent mode of travelling when the snow is in a good state, and the cold not so intense as to be painful, since the pace at which one may go is very great, and the risk of dangerous roads is avoided. I must confess, however, that I am unable to appreciate the luxury, in which a Russian finds so much enjoyment, of driving about for amusement in the little *traineaux* which are used in towns; were there no other objection to this indolent pleasure, the coachman who sits in front is much too near one's face to be agreeable, and he entirely obstructs the view; while the horse, and especially the outrigger, if there are two, sends up a perpetual shower of snow from

his feet, which often compels one to close one's eyes. One of these sledges, however, with a well-dressed coachman and a fine horse, is a very pretty little equipage. The sledge is made of rose-wood, mahogany, or some other handsome wood, well varnished, and neatly relieved by a little gilding; the apron being made of cloth to match the seat, and lined and edged with bear-skin. The coachman wears a cloth caftan edged with fur, and fastened round his waist by a gay-coloured sash; on his head he has a warm cap of crimson or blue velvet, with a fur band, and his face ought to be decorated by a handsome and ample beard. Sledges are sometimes made for family parties capacious enough to hold ten or a dozen people, and are driven like carriages with four or even six horses. A close carriage placed on runners instead of wheels, is called a *Vasok*; it is a very convenient vehicle for town use, and it is preferred by many people for winter travelling on account of its warmth; a *vasok* adapted for this purpose has no springs. It is not, however, considered so safe when the roads are bad, and the snow worn into holes, as the ordinary winter vehicle called a *Kibitka*; these are of various kinds, according to the taste or means of the owner; the best sort being a species of calèche, warmly fitted up, and placed on runners. The *kibitka* is closed with leather curtains instead of glass, and on each side near the ground projects a strong wooden



elbow, so that the vehicle cannot easily be upset; the elbow being a necessary appendage for this purpose to all sledges intended for country use. The kибитка has shafts, and is driven *troika*, that is, with three horses abreast; the traveller inside is able either to sit up or to lie down, stretching himself out as if he were in bed, the vehicle being built long for this purpose. The price of a first-rate kибитка is from twenty to five-and-twenty pounds.

The winter-roads in Russia were never known to be better than this year up to the present time, since the frost has been hard, and the quantity of snow on the ground moderate, both of which are necessary conditions to the comfort of the traveller.

As an instance of the cheapness of Russian travelling, for those who know how to make a bargain; a gentleman who came here a short time ago on business from Kalouga, a distance of four hundred versts, or about three hundred miles, said that instead of taking post-horses, he had hired an *istvostchik* with a very good kибитка and three horses for the period of his absence from home, at the rate of twenty-five roubles, or about a guinea a-week, the man undertaking to feed himself and his horses. On these terms the gentleman said that he was driven on his journey sixty miles a day, that is to say, that he performed the whole distance in five days. Some of the Russian breeds of horses are wonderfully hardy and enduring, and I am told that they will travel, espe-

cially in winter when the draught is light, sixty, eighty, and even a hundred versts without rest, and without being the worse for their exertions.

I have continued through the winter to take exercise on foot whenever I have been able to go out, although walking is not very agreeable, owing to the slippery state of the footpath, and the necessary impediments of a heavy cloak and goloshes lined with fur. Few Russians like to use their feet when they can find any other mode of conveyance, and I should not have been likely to find any promenading companion, had I not been fortunate enough to meet with a countryman who has been four years in Russia, and who was established here not long ago as tutor in the family of General Arapoff. He is of an old Scotch family, has seen a good deal of the world, and was brought up to the bar. In consequence, however, of loss of property and adverse circumstances, he found himself obliged to enter his present profession, and chance brought him to exercise it in Russia. He and I have usually walked together, and you may imagine the pleasure which we have had in meeting with one another in this remote place, in talking English together, and in comparing the observations which we have made on the country.

Mr. R— tells me, that two years ago, at Moscow, he met with an adventure which proved sufficiently serious, and which had very nearly cost him his life.

I believe I have already told you that there are no regular hackney coaches in Russia, but that instead there are licensed *istvostchiks* as they are called, who stand in the streets with *droskhas* in summer, and sledges in winter, wearing, attached to their necks, a tin plate with their number stamped on it. These fellows abound here, and I believe in all other towns in this country, as well as in the capitals. They do not, in general, bear a very high character, and in large towns it is not considered altogether safe at night to take an unknown *istvostchik* in the street, especially in the winter, since robberies and murders have occasionally been perpetrated by these men, and a person wrapped up in a cloak is very defenceless against an unexpected attack.

To return to my friend's story: he came one night out of a coffee house at Moscow, stepped into a sledge, of which there were two or three waiting at the door, and directed the *istvostchik* to drive him to his lodgings. Unfortunately, he neglected to make the porter of the house take down the number of the driver, who in that case would have known that he would be responsible to the police for the safety of his fare. The night was bitterly cold, and R— was wrapped up in a fur pelisse with the collar put up round his head. Presently, as he was gliding quietly along, something was thrown over his head from behind, and he was dragged out upon his back on the snow: he was, however, disengaged from the

noose, which slipped off his neck when he fell, and he instantly got on his legs and saw an *istvostchik* in a sledge driving rapidly away. His own *istvostchik* sat quite still, and made him understand that the other man was drunk, it being a *fête* day, and that his assault was only intended as a joke. R— was not altogether satisfied with this explanation of the matter, but being in a lonely part of the town, and a good way from home, he at length got into his sledge again, having no suspicion that his own driver was a party to the attack, if a serious one had been intended. He, however, put down the collar of his *pelisse*, and kept looking over his shoulder to see that no one came up behind. While his attention was thus occupied, his driver turned suddenly into a dark street, nearly upsetting the sledge against the post at the corner, and almost at the same moment, a rope was suddenly thrown over Mr. R—'s neck from the front, and he was a second time dragged out upon the snow. Before he could rise, three *istvostchiks* were upon him, and they began stamping on his breast, and rifling his pockets, and on his calling out for the police, one of the men put his hand inside the rope around his neck, and nearly strangled him by twisting it, another thrust a hand into his mouth, but a severe bite made him quickly withdraw it, and R— at the same time succeeded in slipping the rope off his neck, otherwise he would have been undoubtedly mur-

dered. To shorten the story, the \*scoundrels at length left him for dead, concluding their ill treatment with two or three stamps upon the breast, and robbing him of a gold watch and chain, and two or three hundred roubles, and what was much worse, taking away his pelisse, cap, and gloves : thus exposed, he could not long have survived, in twenty-seven degrees of frost ; he was, however, happily able to rise, and he saw the three scoundrels driving away as hard as they could in their sledges. He tied a handkerchief round his head, and knowing where he was, made the best of his way to his lodgings, which were not far off.

He, of course, immediately sent for a surgeon, but it was a period of six weeks before he recovered the effects of his ill-treatment, his face having been severely bruised, and his eyes almost forced out of his head. The police came in the morning to receive his account of the attack made upon him, and a week afterwards, when he was able to leave the house, the master of police sent for him, and made three hundred *istvostchiks* pass in review before him ; he was unable, however, positively to identify the culprits,

\* When we were afterwards at Moscow, on returning one night to our hotel, we found the porter in the act of expelling one of these *istvostchiks*, and literally kicking him out of the house, and our *laquais de place* observed that the servant was but doing his duty, for that these fellows were in general such rascals, that, as he expressed himself, " Poor as I am, I would not trust myself in one of their sledges at night, unless I knew something of the driver, for I should be almost sure to be robbed."

and though five were detained upon suspicion, and further enquiries were made, nothing was eventually discovered, and I need not say that poor R— never recovered any of his property. His pelisse had cost eight hundred roubles, so that with the watch and chain, and the money which was stolen, his loss must have amounted to sixty or seventy pounds. He found afterwards that the attack was premeditated, and intended, not for himself, but for another gentleman, who frequented the same coffee-house, and who was known to carry, habitually, a considerable sum of money in his pocket. The possibility of such an outrage being perpetrated with impunity in the heart of the city, and on a bright moonlight night, a circumstance which I omitted before to mention, does not say much for the vigilance with which the streets of Moscow are watched at night.\* The following anecdotes will show that the acuteness of the police is sometimes pretty severely taxed.

A person, dressed in the uniform of a General, came some time ago into the shop of a jeweller at Moscow,—I believe that of Mr. Rosenstrauch, the Prussian Consul—and asked to see some of his highest priced diamond rings, saying that he wanted one as a present for a lady to whom he was going to be

\* The number of dark lanes with blank walls, and the lonely character of the streets of Moscow, render an efficient patrol extremely requisite, and at the same time, from the vast extent of the city, very difficult to establish. The lighting of the streets is disgracefully bad, except, as I am informed, when the Emperor is present.

married. He was immediately shown a number of very valuable and splendid rings, which he examined very attentively, seeming much puzzled in his choice. While this was going on, a beggar opened the shop-door, and the jeweller told him to go away, but the General said, in a compassionate tone, that he had a few copecks which he would give, and beckoning the man, he dropped them into his hat. The beggar began to thank him with the usual whine, but the General cut him short very gruffly and bade him be off; he then resumed his examination of the rings, and at last said that they were all so handsome, that he could not make up his mind which to select, but that he must bring the lady to choose for herself. The jeweller, as he replaced the box, counted over the rings and perceived that one was missing; he asked the General if he had put one in his pocket by mistake; this was denied, and after some further search for the lost ring, he was at last obliged to tax his customer with having stolen it. The General was, of course, highly indignant at the charge, but the jeweller persisted, saying that he should send for the police to search him, which he at last did, though warned by his Excellency of the danger of making a false accusation against a man of his rank.

The General was searched, but the ring was not found, and it was now his turn to become the accuser, by charging the shopkeeper with a false attack upon his character. In the end the affair cost the poor



man two or three thousand roubles before it was settled, in addition to the loss of the ring, which was, perhaps, worth as much more: for the person whom he was accused of defaming was really a general, though his conduct, on this occasion, was certainly "unbecoming an officer and a gentleman," he having, in fact, stolen the ring, and then got rid of it by dropping it, with the copecks, into the hat of his confederate, the pretended beggar.

The following story records the prowess of a Polish lady, who, not long ago, honoured Moscow with her residence, and who seems to have been a most accomplished swindler. It is said that by this exercise of her talents she realised, in the course of one year, between three and four thousand pounds, all of which she spent in the same period, since economy was not one of her virtues. This lady, on one occasion, being in the occupation of a house, obtained, on credit, a quantity of fire-wood, to the value of five hundred roubles: of the best of this she had a considerable quantity piled in her ante-room, as if for use. She then sent for a dealer, not her creditor as may be supposed, and asked him if he would like to purchase some wood, as she had an estate about forty versts from Moscow, on which she meant to cut down a large quantity. The man said that he should have no objection to become the purchaser of the whole, if they could agree about the price. "Why," said she, "you had better go down and look at the

wood." "I will go to-morrow," said he, "but I should wish first to know whether we are likely to deal."

The lady then named the extent of ground which she meant to clear, and describing the quality of the wood as most excellent, said that the price which she asked was forty thousand roubles. "Well," said the tradesman, "that is rather too much, but if I find that the article answers your description, I shall not mind offering five-and-thirty thousand." The lady said that as she wanted a sum of money, she would not dispute about a trifle, though the price she at first asked was little enough; she, however, pressed strongly for an immediate conclusion to the business, and offered to take the tradesman down in her carriage that evening into the country to see the wood. He, however, declared that he was too busy then to leave home, but that he would go the next day: upon this, she replied that she could not wait, and that she must therefore try to deal with some one else. At length the man, considering, from the description which he had received of the wood, that the purchase was likely to turn out profitable, said, that as they were so nearly agreed about terms, he should wish to conclude the bargain at once, and that he would go the following day to satisfy himself, and examine the wood, begging the lady, in the mean time, to take some hand-money as an earnest. To this proposal, however, she refused to accede, insisting

that the man should accompany her into the country that evening if he intended to deal with her.

The conversation went on in this manner for some time, the tradesman assuring her that he could not leave his business that day, and the lady urging the point, till at length a happy idea appeared to strike her, and she said, "After all, perhaps it is unnecessary for you to go down at once to my estate, for you can judge of the wood by this sample," showing him the pile in the ante-room: "I must tell you, however, that this is merely some inferior stuff which I am cutting for my own use."

The dealer was delighted with the specimen thus pointed out, and the wood for sale being, as he was assured, of very much better quality, he determined not to lose so good a bargain, and therefore said that he felt quite satisfied, and would close at once with the lady's offer, if she would accept hand-money, according to the Russian custom, and consider the business as settled. "No," said she, "I am in need of money certainly, and for that reason I consent to take a low price for my wood, but I want a considerable sum, and two or three hundred roubles will be of no use to me." "Well, madam," said the dealer, "I shall not be easy unless the bargain is struck, so I must beg of you to take this on account," handing her notes to the amount of six thousand roubles. The money was with some difficulty received, and the unfortunate victim departed well

satisfied. Another tradesman was immediately sent for, who bought\* for three hundred roubles ready money, the unpaid-for stock of wood which had played so useful a part, and the lady, of course, lost no time in shifting her quarters.

Before this the police had been long in search of her for similar exploits, and, at length, a superior officer having discovered her residence, determined that she should not escape, and went himself with the men to apprehend her. He was received at the door of the house by a maid-servant, who said her mistress was at home, and begged the gentleman to walk in. The police-master desired his men to wait at the door, and was himself shown into a room, where he waited for some time, but no lady made her appearance. Growing suspicious, he determined to search the house at once; but, on reaching the door of the room, he found himself locked in. Of course, on making this discovery, he kicked and called loudly, until not only his own assistants, but some of the lodgers in the house came to see what was the matter. As soon as the officer was released from durance, he began to enquire for Madame—the woman of whom he was in search. “Why,” said the people of the house, “did not you see her? She spoke to you herself at the door, and showed you into this room.” It is unnecessary to add, that she was no longer to be found.

## LETTER XVIII.

The Carnival—Bleenies—Ice-hills—A sledge promenade—A masquerade—A Russian dance—A public dinner.

*Tamboff, February 24, 1838.*

WE have now arrived nearly at the conclusion of the carnival, which ends to-morrow (Sunday) at midnight, since Lent in the Greek church begins not on Ash-Wednesday, but on the Monday before. Indeed, the carnival-week is, strictly speaking, a commencement of the fast, or a sort of preparation for it; for the use of meat is forbidden at this time, though eggs, milk, and butter are allowed.\* This, however, is a distinction which is seldom or never observed by the higher classes, who generally content themselves with abstaining from animal food during a single week of Lent, usually the first or the last. The traders and peasants are, as I have already told you, extremely rigid in observing this and all other rules of the church. One of the

\* The week before Lent is called *butter-week* in Russ.

great amusements of the carnival is eating *bleenies*; a bleeny being a kind of cake which is somewhat like an English crumpet, and is eaten with butter. This luxury was, I presume, originally invented as a compensation for the loss of meat during the extra week of fast which the Greek church imposed on its members. The carnival is the season in which ice-hills are chiefly in request in Russia, but I am sorry to say none have been erected here this winter, and the only specimen I have seen is a very small one made in the court-yard of a private house for the amusement of the children. For the three last days, as well as on Sunday, there have been grand promenades in the principal street, at which nearly all the inhabitants of the town have appeared parading up and down in sledges of every description, at a foot's-pace, in two rows like the lines of carriages in Hyde-park on a Sunday, when Hyde-park was in its glory. Order is maintained by a number of policemen, aided by a few mounted gens-d'armes, and the centre of the street is reserved for sledges with poles instead of shafts, since these are dangerous in the lines, as in the case of a sudden stoppage, the point of the pole may run against the back of the person in the sledge next before.

We have joined the procession more than once with a large party, in a sledge holding ten or twelve people, and drawn by four horses, and our

pole procuring us admission to the open centre-space, we have been able to drive rapidly up and down the street, so as to pass in review the two lines of sledges on either side. The weather during the whole week has been most beautiful,—a hard frost and a bright sun. The Tamboff promenaders, however, instead of enjoying the fine and pleasant portion of the day, do not begin to appear till about four o'clock, when the sun is not very far from the horizon. By about five o'clock the street is crowded, and the sledgers continue patiently to glide up and down till nearly seven. This inconvenient fashion arises, I presume, from the Russian habit of wasting two or three hours of day-light in sleeping after an early dinner. The lower orders consider it most unlucky not to appear in a sledge at the promenade at least once during the carnival; thinking, as I am told, that it helps them on their way to heaven; the forfeiture of which it is also said they fear to risk if they omit to get drunk in the course of the week. Be this as it may, there are few among them who do not scrupulously avoid all difficulty on this score; and during the two last days happy is the master who has a cook sober enough to dress his dinner, or a servant steady enough to place it on the table.

On Thursday there was a public assembly, the last ball of the season, and an extremely dull affair. Yesterday there was a masquerade for the servants,



small traders, &c. We went with some friends into the gallery to witness the amusement, and the decorum, and even politeness, which prevailed was quite as great as among the more fashionable society which had appeared in the same room the night before. The ladies' maids were dressed in imitation of their mistresses, and for the most part wore neither mask nor fancy dress. The men were, however, equipped in general in various grotesque costumes, being disguised by veils placed instead of masks, to hide their features; these were, however, removed in general as the wearers became hot with dancing. Waltzes, quadrilles, and Polonaises were executed with tolerable success, but the national dance, which was frequently repeated, was the great attraction of the evening. This is performed by two persons at a time, and is a sort of pantomime representing a courtship. The partners are placed opposite to one another about seven or eight feet apart; the gentleman first advances with many graceful and winning steps to his fair vis-à-vis, who remains in her place; he then figures in various attractive attitudes before her, but in vain, as she turns brusquely round and rejects him, upon which he finally retires. It is now the lady's turn to make similar advances, which, of course, are received in the same manner with demonstrations of scorn. This alternate advance and retreat is carried on for some time; the talent of the performers consisting in the

coquetry displayed on both sides, and the grace and variety of their movements; at last, the lady instead of rejecting her suitor, accepts his attentions, and deigns to receive the kiss which concludes the dance.

Yesterday, however, I only saw the dance executed in this manner once; the performers on the occasion being a masked man and a very pretty girl dressed in the Russian costume, who both played their parts extremely well. With the exception of this one instance, the performers were all men, and the dance in each case became a trial of skill and activity between the two partners, to see which could invent the most extraordinary and grotesque steps and motions, and which could keep up longest the violent exertion of this amusement.

A farewell dinner was yesterday given by the nobility of this province, to the Ex-Governor on his departure. I was favoured with an invitation, and was glad of the opportunity of witnessing a public dinner in this country. About seventy gentlemen were assembled on the occasion; the tables being laid so as to form three sides of an oblong. At four o'clock, the Ex-Governor arrived, and was received by the principal people in the room; a military band (a very bad one), which was stationed in the gallery, striking up as he entered. We sat down to dinner almost immediately, the guest of the day being placed in the centre of the cross-table, supported on

his right hand by my brother-in-law, who being Marshal, officiated as President; and on his left by two Generals, Oushakoff and Arapoff: I sat opposite to these gentlemen. The dinner was very good, all the best cooks in the town having contributed their services, without, as the event proved, "spoiling the broth." Towards the conclusion of dinner, we stood up and drank the Emperor's health in champagne, the wine always used for toasts in Russia. The band played "God save the king," the glasses were replenished, and the President gave the health of the Ex-Governor without speech or comment; we again rose to do honour to the toast, and the compliment was acknowledged in a few words. General Oushakoff's health was then drunk with congratulations on a new Order which he had lately received; he briefly returned thanks, and dinner being by this time brought to a close, we rose from table, and coffee was handed round the room, where we stood conversing in groups. The Ex-Governor soon after made his bow and took his leave, but not till the champagne had once more circulated as a stirrup cup to wish him a safe journey to Petersburg.

A public dinner in England is generally arranged for the purpose of allowing some person or persons an opportunity of making speeches, and expressing opinions on public matters: but this can never be the case in Russia, where no one can venture to discuss

political topics : and under these circumstances I certainly think that the few words in which the toasts were yesterday proposed and responded to, were far preferable to harangues half an hour long, on the extraordinary merits of the gentlemen to whom the compliment of drinking their health was paid, and equally tedious assurances in return of deep feeling and sincere gratitude, in which, most probably, no one would have believed.

## LETTER XIX.

Intention of leaving Tamboff—State of the weather—Expedition to Bonderry—Ouchabas—Night-travelling on a steppe—Losing the way—A cloth manufactory in a lady's hands—Return to Tamboff.

*Tamboff, March 1st, 1838.*

THIS is, I believe, the last letter which I shall send you from Tamboff, for we have already dispatched a great part of our luggage by a carrier, and we mean to set out for Moscow ourselves in a few days. Indeed, from the present state of the weather, it seems that we have no time to lose,\* for the frost is giving way, and if the thaw continues, the ice on the rivers will become unsafe, and the winter roads be altogether spoiled; indeed I am afraid that they will at any rate be very indifferent, as we have had a good deal of snow lately, which no doubt is worn into considerable holes in this mild weather, the thermometer having been above the freezing point both yesterday and to-day. Until very lately, the roads have been

\* This proved a groundless alarm, as the frost returned with great severity, and lasted till the 10th of April.

remarkably good for travelling, owing to the severity of the frost, and the small quantity of snow on the ground; it is now, however, become very deep in this part of the country. I have already had a little specimen of a winter journey, in an expedition which I made a few days ago with General Arapoff and Mr. R——, the English gentleman, who, as I have already told you, is residing in his house. The General was setting off on a long journey, intending on his way to visit a large cloth manufactory belonging to a widowed sister, which he superintends in her absence; and he kindly proposed to R—— and myself to accompany him so far on his road, sleep as he meant to do at his sister's house, called Bonderry, between fifty and sixty versts hence, and return home the next day, while he proceeded on his journey. We accepted the invitation, and set off in a heavy fall of snow, about four o'clock on Sunday evening, Monday being a day on which a Russian will seldom, if he can avoid it, commence a journey. The General and I travelled in a *kibitka*, a vehicle with a head which I have already described to you, and R—— followed close behind in a large open sledge extremely comfortable and well built, and in which we both returned the next day. The first part of the road was pronounced on the whole to be not amiss, though we certainly met with some tolerably deep holes, or *ouchabas*, as they are termed. Each vehicle had three horses, and we performed a stage

of three and thirty versts, nearly five and twenty miles, in two hours and five minutes, our shaft horse trotting all the way. When we proceeded, after changing horses, we found the road much worse; and occasionally, when we were going along at a great pace, we were thrown on our beam-ends in so formidable a manner, that I once or twice thought it impossible that the kibitka could right itself again, which however it always did, being largely possessed of the quality of stable equilibrium.

The night came on exceedingly dark, the last ten versts of our journey lay across an open steppe, and the snow, which had now been falling heavily for some hours, had completely obliterated the discoloured line which would otherwise have marked the road, but which was now as white as the rest of the plain. It was not, therefore, surprising that in a few minutes we found, from the horses sinking up to their knees in the soft snow, that we were off the beaten track, and we did not even know whether it lay to our right or left. The servants and drivers were now obliged to get down, and walk about, stamping with their feet, to find the hard line of road: it was a good while before they succeeded in their search, and we had quite time enough to meditate on the prospect of passing the night where we were, an event which was then by no means improbable. At length, however, the people hit on the beaten track, which was not many yards from us, and we were once more



in motion ; one of the men walking before us for some distance to feel the way, which by great caution we did not again lose ; and the direction of the wind having been observed at first, to prevent the chance of our unwittingly retracing our steps, we at length had the satisfaction of seeing the lights of the village to which we were going, and soon afterwards we found ourselves comfortably installed in Madame L—'s house, which was large and handsome, and where every thing was prepared for our reception ; a messenger having preceded us with the necessary orders.

The following morning we went with the General over a great part of the manufactory, which is for the supply of cloth for soldiers' uniforms, and one of the largest establishments of the kind in Russia, the number of persons employed amounting to nearly three thousand. There is a Frenchman at the head of the concern ; but Madame L—, the proprietress, superintends it herself when at home. This seems rather an extraordinary undertaking for a woman ; but certainly, in Russia, where every landed proprietor almost is a manufacturer, ladies often exhibit business-like tastes and talents, which I should imagine are not often developed among us.

After going over the manufactory, which I need not describe, but which seemed well and systematically conducted, we had an early dinner ; and I then took leave of my kind friend General Arapoff and

R—, and I set off to return to this town. The day was most disagreeable, we had a high wind with a driving sleet, and nothing could be more dismal than our view as we crossed the steppe, in which we had lost our road the night before. A flat waste, covered with snow, surrounded us on every side, the horizon being obscured by the falling sleet: and as we approached the boundary of the plain, the trees and other objects, which indistinctly presented themselves, gave the idea of a shore for which we were steering across the sea; and the road not being particularly good, our sledge pitched up and down, and from side to side, like a boat in rough water, only that our bones bore but too undeniable testimony to the solidity of the surface which we were traversing. It grew dark before we reached Tamboff, and we missed our way more than once, in a plain four or five miles wide, which skirts the town. The lights, however, which were visible before us, marked our direction; and by sometimes catching sight of a verst-post, and sometimes of the black railing of a bridge, of which there are several over hollow water-courses, we got safely to the end of our journey without much delay. Till I went on this expedition, I had never been in a kибитка: it certainly is a very comfortable carriage to sit in, and the motion of a sledge is highly agreeable when one is going fast, and the road is not too bad; but the jolts when the kибитка lights on the ground, after a sort of jump, which a hard ridge

sometimes occasions, are tolerably severe; and I have seen quite enough to convince me, that a long journey at this moment is not very inviting. The best season for winter travelling is now past, and we must expect bad roads and changeable weather; we shall, therefore, be doubtless very happy, when we can look back upon the nine hundred miles of snow which we must traverse between this place and Petersburg. We do not mean to stay long at Moscow, though M—'s family are now there, for fear the winter should break up and detain us, as travelling, at that moment, is very inconvenient; and it is difficult, and at times impossible, to cross the rivers during the spring-floods, produced by the melting of the snow. We shall travel to Moscow in a kибитка, and we shall then hire a Diligence to take us to Petersburg, whence I hope to date my next letter.

## LETTER XX.

Arrival at St. Petersburg—Appearance of thaw at Tamboff—Departure—Increase of cold—The first halt—Motion of kibitka—A long stage—Journeying along rivers—Arrival at Moscow—A winter scene—Stay at Moscow—Character of the hotels—A sledge—Diligence—A snow storm—Slow progress—Deep holes in the snow—Small quantity of snow further north—Prince Serge Galitzin—Visitors not announced in Russia—A party at Prince Serge's—The Prince of Georgia—The Cheremetieff and Galitzin hospitals at Moscow—Scanty population of that city.

*St. Petersburg, March 27th, 1838.*

You will perceive, by the date of this letter, that we have completed the journey which we were about to undertake when I last wrote ; and you will be glad to find that we have made so long a stride on our way homewards, for, in point of time, Petersburg is as near to England as to Tamboff, at least when the Gulf of Finland is open : this, however, will not be the case for some weeks to come, and the Baltic steam-boats will certainly not begin to ply till the second week in May at the earliest.

We arrived here on Saturday last, having spent ten days in Moscow on our way ; and before I give

you any account of our journey, I may as well say, that although Petersburg is now so full, that it is difficult to meet with lodgings, we have been fortunate enough to engage an excellent set of rooms, clean and well-furnished, and in one of the best situations in the town—The Little Million—at the Hotel de la Bourse, kept by a Frenchman. Here we established ourselves yesterday; and since we are also provided with an English servant, who has been many years in Russia, we are comfortably settled for the remainder of our stay in this country.

In my last letter from Tamboff, I told you, that from the state of the weather, we were afraid that the ice on the rivers would be unsafe, and the roads become altogether unfit for sledge travelling. The thaw, which excited our alarm, continued for two days after I wrote. On Saturday (the 3d) Reaumur's thermometer stood six degrees above the freezing point; the snow was melting fast, the streets flowing with water, and the account which we received of the roads were such, that we determined in the evening to risk no longer delay, but to set out the following night on our journey, instead of waiting till Tuesday, as we had previously fixed; we feared, indeed, that we had already postponed it too long. About half an hour, however, after we had determined on this precipitate flight, a friend came in and said he had good news to tell us, for that the wind had changed to the north, and that we might expect

a return of frost, and, in fact, to our great delight, before we went to bed, the thermometer was below zero, and the snow was beginning to grow crisp. The following morning we had three degrees of cold; but we did not choose again to alter our plans or trust to the continuance of this favourable weather, since it might prove but of short duration: by the evening, therefore, every thing was ready for our departure.

The last moments of our stay were, as is always the case on such occasions, any thing but agreeable: we took leave of our countryman R—, whom we left with much regret alone in this distant spot, and bade adieu to some other friends, and finally, to my brother and sister-in-law, whose kindness and hospitality had been unbounded during the long period which we had spent in their house, and who, on our departure, as during our stay, forgot nothing which could contribute to our comfort and accommodation. At length, well wrapped up, we arranged ourselves in the kибитка, and set out a quarter of an hour before midnight, to the great satisfaction of our Russian attendant, who would not willingly have commenced the journey on Monday. The road, as we expected, was in a very indifferent state; but the cold, which at first was not intense, increased rapidly, and therefore the snow became hard; and though its surface was much broken, we were able to proceed tolerably fast, and, by eight

o'clock in the morning, we had come about forty miles.

For some reason or other, however, we were driven without stopping, through the town of Kazloff, and we came to no other place where any tolerable accommodation was to be met with, till five o'clock in the afternoon: having therefore travelled for seventeen hours without stopping, except to change horses, we were by this time exceedingly hungry, as it was out of the question to eat in the kибитка, and were somewhat cold; I had, however, slept the greater part of the way in spite of our incessant tossing up and down and from side to side, in the *ouchabas*.\* We had now come a hundred and seventy versts, and in the small town of Riask, we enjoyed the luxury of entering clean and warm rooms, in which we had breakfasted on our way from Moscow in the autumn. Here we disencumbered ourselves of cloaks, warm boots and caps, which we placed around the stove, while our basket, well stored by our kind friends at Tamboff, with every thing we could require on the road, was produced; a steaming *semavar*,† soon made its appearance; and hot tea and cold partridge pie were not the less agreeable for our seventeen hours' tossing over the snow. After remaining here about an hour and a-half, and getting thoroughly warm, we wrapped ourselves up once more, and travelling all

\* Holes in the snow worn by sledges.

† Tea-urn heated with charcoal.



night, reached Riazan about eight o'clock on the Tuesday morning. At Riazan, we were driven to a very fair inn, where we got a comfortable breakfast. We had found the road very bad all night, and we constantly felt the sensation of being upset, when the kibitka tilted sideways on the projecting elbow ; after a time, however, we paid little attention to these occurrences, though the shock with which the vehicle righted itself after one of the runners had been lifted off the ground, was not always very agreeable. Owing to the piercing wind which met us, we were forced to keep the leather veil which closed up the front of the kibitka almost always lowered, so that we travelled in the dark, which was unpleasant, although nothing in truth can be more dreary and dismal than the monotonous waste of snow extending around on every side. From Riazan, we were obliged to engage horses to take us all the way without changing, to Columnia, a distance of more than seventy miles, which they accomplished in ten hours, including a stoppage of two hours to bait, half way. We left Riazan at ten in the morning, and got to Columnia by eight in the evening. During the greater part of this day we travelled along the ice of the Occa and another river which runs into it. So long as we were on the ice, the road was smooth and good, but the banks which we had to ascend and descend were steep and dangerous, and we were more than once nearly upset, owing to the carelessness of our *istvostchik*,

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who drove us down these slippery places, in such a manner that the kibitka overpowered the horses and swung round sideways. Towards evening the frost became very intense, and when we reached Columnia, we were told that there were then twenty-five degrees of cold by Reaumur, and this with a searching wind. We, however, stopped here no longer than was necessary to procure horses, which we did after a long delay. At the next station we supped, and were obliged to proceed again with the same horses. The road, during these two stages, was worse than ever, and we got on very slowly, expecting constantly to be upset, in spite of our previous experience, and it was ten o'clock on the Wednesday morning before we reached the second station, the horses which had brought us from Columnia being thoroughly jaded before they had finished their journey. The window at the inn where we breakfasted was filled with writing, and I discovered among the various inscriptions, a few lines in English. We had now the satisfaction of knowing that we were but twenty versts from the end of our journey, and procuring fresh horses, we were driven rapidly along over an excellent road, and our passports were demanded at the gates of Moscow before one o'clock. We drove to the Hotel du Nord in the Tverskoi, to which we had been recommended, and here we got rooms, though I cannot say much for their comfort or cleanliness.

The only picturesque object which we saw in the whole journey, was a village through which we passed on the last morning, a little after six o'clock, just as the sun was rising. It being the time at which the peasants light their stoves, the smoke was curling in the bright clear air from nearly every house in the village; and the long straggling street was filled by a large *arboze*, (or string of carriers' sledges) the coats of the horses, and the long beards, and fur caps of the drivers being white with frost. The whole scene which, lighted up by the rising sun, was really very striking, formed no bad picture of a winter morning in Russia, affording a characteristic view of the dwellings costumes and occupations of the people at this season of the year. We never suffered much from cold during our journey, intense as the frost was; its most unpleasant effect was its congealing the breath in such a manner as to cover our fur collars with icicles, which again partially melted on touching the skin, so that it was very difficult to keep our faces from being constantly wet; and we were always obliged to dry at the fire every thing that had been within reach of the mouth, whenever we entered a house.

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I have little to say of our stay at Moscow, which only lasted ten days, during which time we both suffered much from colds and sore throats. The weather was very unpleasant, and the streets so

encumbered with snow,\* that it was excessively disagreeable to drive about on account of the *ouchabas*, while it was out of the question to walk any distance, owing to the slippery and neglected state of the foot pavements. Our hotel, moreover, was so uncomfortable, that we should hardly have remained as long as we did, had not M—'s family, with whom we spent most of our time, been in town. The hotels in Moscow are, I believe, celebrated for dirt and discomfort, and certainly the Hotel du Nord possesses these qualities in perfection. The noise, which began close to our bed-room door at five or six o'clock in the morning, was incessant; the general want of cleanliness most offensive; and the whole house as ill arranged as possible, the charges for bad accommodation being sufficiently high: yet this house has the character of being one of the first hotels in Moscow. There is one, however, of which we heard while we were there, kept by an Englishwoman, Mrs. Howard, which we were told was far superior to any of the others in comfort and cleanliness.

Once at Moscow, we considered the remaining five hundred miles of our journey as nothing in comparison to the four hundred which we had already travelled, taking it for granted that the high-road between the two capitals was never in a very bad

\* The streets of Moscow, at this time, from the sandy colour and loose consistency of the snow, had exactly the appearance of being thickly covered with moist sugar.

state, even in winter. We hired a diligence built for four passengers, in addition to the conductor and driver, paying three hundred roubles,\* about twelve guineas, for the journey to Petersburg, the only additional cost being our expenses on the road, which amounted to very little, and a guinea to the conductor on our arrival.

Comfortably arranged in this vehicle, which consisted of two chariot bodies in one, fixed on runners, of course without springs, we set off on Monday evening, the 19th, about six o'clock, hoping to arrive here on Thursday. Our expectations, however, of a good road, were grievously disappointed. As soon as we got into the country we found a snow-storm in full force, and the road so bad from the quantity of soft snow and from the drifts, that we were four hours and a half performing a stage of not more than twenty miles. We stopped for supper at one of the Imperial inns, which, when giving an account of our journey last summer, I told you had been established along this road. We intended to proceed immediately, but our conductor, who spoke French and German, came in presently to say that some travellers, who had just come up on their way to Moscow,

\* The diligence fares are much lower in winter than when they go upon wheels, as they can travel with fewer horses. The allowance of luggage to each passenger taking a single place is only twenty pounds: but by engaging the whole diligence we became entitled to load it with as much as it could carry, and we were therefore, able to convey all our luggage with us.

gave such an account of the road, especially in one spot, where a diligence was already sticking fast, that he thought we had better remain where we were till morning, when, at least, if we got into a difficulty, we might obtain assistance. We accordingly wrapped ourselves in our cloaks, and lay down on sofas to wait for day-light; and the next day we had every reason to be satisfied with our prudence in not travelling in the dark: we were dragged along with much difficulty, and were nearly six hours performing a stage of less than three-and-twenty miles. I need not trouble you with a detail of every stage: suffice it to say that we were obliged to stop again the second night for some hours, and that the journey the following day was worse than any thing we had hitherto experienced.\* The *ouchabas* were deep and wide, and our conductor appeared to be constantly expecting an overturn, an accident which happens much more easily to a close carriage with luggage on the roof than to a kибитка. We more than once stuck fast in the bottom of a hole, and were obliged to get out before the horses could extricate the diligence; at other times, to avoid this difficulty, the *istvostchik* would put them full gallop at an *ouchaba*, in order

\* Great numbers of men were employed along the road in filling up the holes and levelling the snow, and in some places the snow-plough was also in use to remove the drifts; the snow, however, fell faster than it could be cleared away, and as soon as one hole was filled up another was formed.

that the impetus with which we descended one side of the ditch, for such they often were, might carry us up the other side. You may conceive how agreeably we were knocked about by this method of charging the obstacles which presented themselves, to say nothing of the pleasure of constantly anticipating an overturn. We escaped all misfortunes, however, except aching bones, and arrived on Wednesday evening at Torjok, which we had expected to reach twenty-four hours sooner, or in exactly half the time. From this spot we found the road gradually improve, the quantity of snow diminishing as we proceeded northwards, and all that night and all the next day we had the satisfaction of gliding smoothly and rapidly along. Late on Thursday night we lay down to rest on sofas for about three hours, and starting again before daylight, we reached Novogorod to breakfast. Here the snow, which lay so deep further south, was hardly sufficient to cover the ground, and we had already met diligences travelling on wheels. During the remainder of our journey, a distance of more than two hundred versts, we experienced as much difficulty from want of snow as we had in the earlier part of our journey from its superabundance. The road, in some places, was quite bare, or covered only with a thin coating of ice, which, in the day-time, was thawed by the sun, so that we frequently stuck fast in the mud. At length, two stages from Petersburg, we found a diligence upon wheels, into which,



having transferred ourselves and our luggage, we, of course, met with no further difficulties, and arrived here, as I have already told you, on Saturday evening, having been five days and nights, instead of three, upon the road. We drove to a private hotel, kept by a Mrs. Wilson, where we got temporary accommodation, and from whose house we transferred ourselves yesterday into our present lodgings.

When I wrote from Moscow in the autumn, I told you, I believe, that it was yearly losing ground in point of society: the rich and fashionable, all who seek amusement or promotion, flock to Petersburg, which, being the residence of the Court, and the seat of Government, affords, in both these respects, far higher attractions than the ancient capital can hold out. I am assured that there is but one private house in Moscow which is at all kept up on a splendid scale, and that I fortunately had an opportunity of visiting, although, from an accidental delay, my letter of introduction to its owner, Prince Serge Galitzin, did not arrive till two or three days before our departure. It, however, immediately procured me the honour of a call from the Prince, accompanied by an invitation to a party, and he was kind enough, when I saw him, to express his regret at not having known sooner that we were at Moscow, as he had expected us in the autumn, to pay a visit to his villa in the neighbourhood, as we passed through, on our way from Yaroslav: this we had intended, meaning to drive over in

the morning and return in the evening, but some accident had deprived us of this pleasure. Prince Serge, who has a large fortune, and who lives in a manner suited to it, is a specimen of modern refinement engrafted on the character of the old Russian Grand Seigneur, a race which is now become nearly extinct; for the Russian nobles have seldom fortune enough to unite elegance with splendour and profusion, and they have generally learned to prefer the comfort of a moderate-sized well-furnished house, with a suitable establishment, to the cold and empty magnificence of their ancient overgrown hotels, and ill-appointed retinues of servants. The huge old palace at Moscow is deserted for a modern residence at Petersburg.

I have probably told you, in some former letter, how little it is the custom in this country for servants to announce a visitor, and this, to a stranger, is sometimes rather embarrassing, as, on entering a crowded room, he does not know where to find the master or mistress of the house. I experienced this difficulty, in some degree, when I went to Prince Serge Galitzin's party, for, after walking through a long enfilade of empty saloons, when I at last came to the apartments which were lighted up, I had to seek my host, whom I had never seen, in two large rooms filled with card-players, every one of whom was equally strange to me. The servants, of whom there were a number in attendance, motioned

me on, and pointed to the right, and when I had advanced, according to their signals, into the inner room, a gentleman quickly rose from one of the tables, and coming forward, shook hands with me, and begged me to sit by him till his rubber was ended; this, of course, was the master of the house; but it would certainly be more convenient in such a case for a servant to attract his attention by pronouncing the stranger's name aloud. When the Prince had finished his game, after talking to me for some time, he proposed to show me his pictures, of which he has a fine collection; a servant was summoned with lights, and we went through the greater part of the house, which is very fine, and on a grand scale, examining the paintings, of which the Prince pointed out the most meritorious. He talked much of Lord Londonderry, who had visited him the year before, and he asked whether the Marquis' house in London was finer than his own, a question which I could not profess to answer. The grand dining-room was a splendid apartment, its chief ornament being a beautiful piece of sculpture, a female figure and a child, the size of life, in white marble, which he had brought from Italy. When we returned from our tour of inspection, I was introduced to two or three persons, with whom I spent the remainder of the time I staid, in conversing: among others was the Prince of Georgia, the grandson of the last King, who, as I have told you, lost his crown, while his

son forfeited his liberty in attempting to regain it, and was imprisoned for life in a Russian fortress.

Moscow abounds in charitable institutions: of these I only visited two, namely, the Cheremetieff and the Galitzin Hospitals, which are both noble establishments, intended for the same purpose, namely, the reception of sick people, and the maintenance of a certain number of old men and women. Each owes its foundation to the munificence of a private individual; the one having been endowed by Count Cheremetieff, and the other by a Prince Galitzin, uncle to Prince Serge, the present director of it. The former is the richer institution of the two, and, in addition to its other charities, it annually provides marriage-portions for a certain number of young women.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the order and cleanliness which appeared in every part of these two hospitals, over each of which I was conducted by the medical gentlemen in attendance. The Cheremetieff has the advantage, in point of architecture, but the same system is apparently followed in the interior management of both. There can be little doubt, that in many cases the patients derive as much benefit from the spacious rooms in which they are placed, and the pure and wholesome air which they consequently breathe, as from the medical treatment which they undergo.

In each hospital there is a church for the inmates.

I passed through that at the Galitzin while a funeral service was going on: the coffin was placed on a bier in the centre of the church, the lid being off, so that the face of the dead body was exposed; and around the head were placed three lighted candles. Near the Cheremetieff Hospital, we were shown a singular looking high tower, which is now used for raising water to distribute over the city, but which was built in former days by a rich merchant, named Souchareff, for the charitable purpose of furnishing employment to the poor in a time of scarcity.

I will conclude the subject of Moscow, by venturing the remark, that, striking as the Kremlin is, and fine as many of the public and private buildings are, much of the city has more the air of an overgrown country town than of a capital; there being a deficiency of grand arteries, and a great part of the town being filled with a multitude of irregular narrow streets, flanked often, on one or both sides, by a dead wall; there is a rusticity too in the general style of the equipages, which breathes of the province; the principal cause, however, of this impression which Moscow certainly made upon me, is probably the general dulness of the streets, which, owing to the immense extent of the town in proportion to its population, present none of that thronged and bustling appearance which one naturally looks for in a great capital. Here the case is very different, and the streets of Petersburg, which were empty and de-

serted in June, are now crowded with foot passengers, handsome carriages, and sledges; some of the principal thoroughfares are indeed so crowded, that it requires caution to avoid being knocked down in crossing from one side to the other, and the shouts of the coachmen, *pádi, pádi*, “get out of the way,” are incessant. They drive excessively fast, but they will avoid hurting you, if possible, for fear of the punishment,—which is, to be made a soldier.

I will now conclude this long letter, by assuring you that we are very happy to find ourselves at the end of our journey, and not at all inclined to set out upon another, until the weather is a little more genial, and carriages on wheels can be used, instead of sledges, as we have not yet quite forgotten the sensation of jolting in and out of an *ouchaba*. By-the-bye, some friends who left Tamboff about the same time as ourselves, and who arrived here a few days before us, were upset twice in the course of the journey, so that we may consider ourselves fortunate in having escaped all accidents.

## LETTER XXI.

Thaw—Cold in April—Alexandrovsky—General Wilson—The Imperial Manufactory—Foundlings—English artizans—Mr. Law.

*St. Petersburg, April 11th, 1838.*

WE are in hopes that the winter is now nearly over, as the frost yesterday began to give way, and the thaw is proceeding rapidly. Every body will rejoice heartily at the arrival of Spring, for such a winter as this has been, few persons can remember. Greater degrees of cold have been known; but the duration of frost, and its continued severity for nearly five months, is heretofore unprecedented even in Russia. This day week, (the 4th of April,) there were in Petersburg nineteen degrees of cold,\* and in the country twenty. The ice on the Neva is from forty-two to forty-four inches thick, and the ground is frozen to the depth of six feet.

We went yesterday to see the Imperial manufactory at Alexandrovsky, about thirteen versts hence, in compliance with an invitation from General Wilson, who, for thirty years, has superintended the

\* By Reaumur.



establishment, and who is a most excellent and popular person. The articles manufactured here are of various kinds; in one department cotton is spun; in another, sheets, table-linen, &c. are wove; and in a third, are made all the playing-cards which are used in Russia, as the Crown reserves the monopoly of this manufacture. About three thousand operatives are employed altogether; and of these, nearly one thousand are foundlings, boys and girls from twelve years old, at which time they are brought from the hospital where they have been reared, up to twenty-one, at which age the young men become their own masters, may marry, and may quit the manufactory, or remain as paid workmen, according as they please; the girls are allowed to marry at eighteen.

From the moment of their arrival at the manufactory, these children, in addition to their food, clothing, and lodging, receive small monthly wages, half of which is given to them by way of pocket-money, and the other half is placed at interest in a savings-bank, so that when they come of age, or marry, they have a little fund of three or four hundred roubles with which to begin the world. Immediately after our arrival at Alexandrovsky, we were taken to see the foundlings at dinner, which, as it was Lent, the only fast in the year which they are required to keep, consisted of soupe-maigre, fish, rye-bread, and quass—all served in pewter. The day

was an ordinary working-day, and there was no preparation for visitors, our arrival, owing to a misunderstanding, being quite unexpected; nothing, however, could exceed the neatness and perfect cleanliness of these young manufacturers, more especially the girls, whose hair, in particular, excited our admiration, every head being arranged alike, and with a degree of taste and neatness which many a lady might copy. Caps are never worn by the lower classes in this country, and certainly the well brushed hair, drawn smoothly over the forehead, and fastened at the back by a high comb, rendered the line of heads infinitely more agreeable to the eye, and at least as cleanly in appearance, as the row of mob-caps, which would have been ranged down the table had these been English charity-girls. A wooden screen, about six feet high, ran down the middle of the hall to separate the two sexes. Leaving them at their meal, we were shewn through the dormitories, which were beautifully clean and airy, almost deserving the name of elegant; and to each set was attached a convenient washing-room, well supplied with water.

When we returned to the hall, dinner was over, and at our appearance a bell was rung, on which the whole body, young men, boys, and girls, stood up and sung a hymn, at the conclusion of which, the bell gave the signal for departure, and the two sexes moved out of the hall at different ends, in

the most orderly manner. I was told by General Wilson's brother, that in the thirty years, during which he has had the management of this manufactory, there has never been more than one instance of a girl misconducting herself, a fact which strongly attests the excellence of the regulations which are observed.

This, like all the other public establishments, such as barracks and hospitals, which I have seen in this country, appears a perfect model of order and cleanliness; a fact which is the more striking in Russia, since there is often abundant room for improvement in these respects in private houses. Most branches of the work at Alexandrovsky are under English foremen, so that there is a colony here of our countrymen, amounting to seventy or eighty persons; and divine service is performed in the school-room, every Sunday evening, by the British chaplain,\* Mr. Law, who most kindly goes over from Petersburg for this purpose.

I believe this excursion to Alexandrovsky is the only incident which I have to mention since we have been here; you must, therefore, be contented with a short letter, as you would not thank me if I filled it up with a description of Petersburg, or an

\* It is but justice to my friend, Mr. Law, to add, that this duty, which is entirely voluntary and gratuitous on his part, is a laborious addition to two full services which he performs every Sunday in the British church at St. Petersburg.

account of the relations and friends, who are kind enough to invite us to their houses. However, as Easter is approaching, I hope to have more to tell the next time I write ; meanwhile adieu!

## LETTER XXII.

Conclusion of Lent—The Metropolitan washing the feet of twelve priests—Want of decorum in a Russian congregation—Commencement of Easter Sunday—Ceremony at the Kazan church—*Christos voscress*—The Emperor and a Mahometan sentry—The *katchellies*—Coaches and six—Grand promenade—The Emperor and Empress—Silent reception of his Majesty, in accordance with Russian ideas of etiquette—Number of holydays injurious to Russia—Why not abolished.

*Petersburg, April 24th, 1838.*

LENT is now over, and the Russians, to their great joy, are once more at liberty to eat, dance, and marry as they please.

On the day before Good Friday, we went to the Kazan church, to see the ceremony of the Metropolitan washing the feet of twelve priests. In the centre of the church, which was much crowded, a platform was raised about five feet from the ground, and on this were placed thirteen chairs, six on each side for the priests, and one at the top for the Metropolitan. Mass was first celebrated at the grand altar, and at the conclusion, the Metropolitan ascended the platform, and took his seat, facing the altar, while six

or seven deacons placed themselves behind his chair. A service was now chaunted, and soon after it had begun, two bishops made their appearance on the platform, and after turning round, and bowing to the altar, and then saluting in like manner the Metropolitan, they seated themselves on either side of him : two priests followed, and took their places in the two next chairs in like manner ; others succeeded them, and at last the twelve chairs were filled. The Metropolitan then rose up, laid aside his ribbons and other decorations, took off several robes one after another, and girded himself with a long towel, the chaunted service still continuing. He then proceeded round to each of the twelve priests, with a large silver bason, and went through the form of washing their feet, a deacon accompanying and assisting him. This part of the ceremony occupied but a very short time, and the service was immediately afterwards concluded.

It is impossible to enter a Russian church without being struck by the want of decorum which the absence of seats produces. The whole congregation, except a few persons of consequence, who are placed near the altar, stand pell-mell, without order or regularity ; so that when the church is full, the crowd becomes an absolute mob, and those who are attending to the service, are disturbed by the moving of others around them. The services in the Greek church are many of them very long, and

the fatigue of standing during the whole time is very great.

On the Saturday night, about eleven o'clock, I went again to the Kazan church to see Easter Sunday ushered in. There was a sort of illumination in the streets, earthen lamps being placed in rows on the edge of the foot-pavement; but the light which they produced was far from brilliant; the lamps were wide apart, and the effect very paltry, as you may suppose. There was an unusual bustle in the whole town; the pavements were crowded with foot passengers, and a ceaseless stream of carriages, with lighted lamps, was rolling along.

Inside the church, near the door, were two stalls for the sale of wax candles of various sizes, and these could scarcely be furnished fast enough to supply the demand; for almost every person who entered, bought at least one taper, and many provided themselves with five or six: they did not, however, light them as yet, but kept them in readiness for midnight. After looking for some time at the crowd which kept moving in and out of the church, I went and stood in front of it until, at half-past eleven, a rocket was sent up, and a gun fired from the fortress: this being a signal for divine service to commence in all the churches in Petersburg. I did not hear the second gun which the fortress fired at midnight to announce the commencement of Easter-day; but all the people immediately lighted their candles, and a procession



issued from the church, and made the circuit of its walls outside ; the ecclesiastics who headed it bearing the cross and sacred banners, and chaunting a service, and the congregation following them with lighted tapers.

I observed that many of the common people in the crowd had in their hands what appeared to be plates tied up in napkins, and I find that this was the first meat which they intended to eat on the conclusion of Lent, and which they brought to church according to an ancient custom, to be blessed by the priests.

I should have told you that on Good Friday all the Court go,—the gentlemen as usual in uniform, but the ladies in deep mourning,—to kiss the representation of our Saviour's tomb in the Palace chapel. On Easter Sunday nothing goes on but felicitations, presenting of eggs (the emblem of the Resurrection), and kissing. Servants may kiss their masters or mistresses ; and a peasant may kiss the Emperor, though I should doubt whether in the latter case the privilege is often exercised. “ *Christos voscress*,” “ Christ is risen,” is the universal salutation ; and it is a curious thing to see two peasants or tradesmen meet in the street : “ *Christos voscress*,” they cry out ; then off go their hats and caps ; and then with one accord they rush together and inflict on one another three kisses \*

\* The custom of men kissing one another is as common in Russia as in Germany. Gentlemen hardly ever presume to shake hands

on the cheek,—right, left, right; after this each replaces his hat, first making a most profound bow to the other, and they separate. There is a story told of the present Emperor, who it is said, on Easter-day passing a sentry, saluted him as usual with the words “Christ is risen.” “No; he’s not, your Majesty,” said the soldier, presenting arms. “He’s not!” said the Emperor; “what do you mean? this is Easter Sunday.” “I know that, please your Majesty,” replied the man; “but I am a Mahometan.”

The Russians, high and low, are great observers of times and seasons; and custom requires that at Easter, as well as at Christmas, all persons should visit their acquaintances to congratulate them on the occasion of the festival. Several carriages broke down last week, in the performance of this arduous duty, for the streets were in a terrible state, and some almost impassable, owing to the thaw, the snow not having entirely disappeared, but being worn into deep holes, which of course were full of water. On Easter Sunday, I saw a few sledges for the last time.

Opposite to the Admiralty, in the open place, large wooden booths had been erected for theatrical and other exhibitions, and in front of the booths were what are called *katchellies*, namely, swings, merry-go-

with ladies, even if they are intimate acquaintances; in lieu of this, the gentleman kisses the lady’s hand, while she at the same time puts her lips to his cheek. This custom is on the decline at Petersburg.

rounds, and similar inventions which were in full play during the whole of Easter-week. On the three last days there was a carriage promenade in front of the *katchellies*; and in the throng a string of twenty coaches-and-six, followed by six outriders, was conspicuous. The carriages were plain and neat, painted green, and all exactly alike, with handsome powerful horses, equipped in heavy German harness, and the coachman, postillions, footmen, and outriders, dressed in scarlet great coats with capes, cocked hats, leather breeches, and jack boots. The coachmen were evidently not much accustomed to driving four-in-hand,\* and an English whip would hardly have admired their manner of handling the reins. These were court equipages, and each carriage contained six young ladies belonging to the public institutions or schools at Petersburg, under the patronage of the Empress, who annually bestows this indulgence upon the pupils.

The last and gayest of the promenades took place, according to custom, the day before yesterday, being the Sunday after Easter: it was attended by the court, and all the fashionable world, and every vehicle in Petersburg was placed in requisition. We remained at our windows, and we could not have been better placed, as, owing to the police regulations, all the carriages were obliged to pass down our street,

\* The horses were driven, not in the Russian style, but in English, or rather German fashion.

in order to enter the Admiralty Place, and from about half-past five in the evening, the stream for two hours was incessant. Soon after six o'clock, the officers of the regiment of *Gardes à cheval*, who had been gradually assembling, drew up under our windows in scarlet uniforms, waiting to escort the Emperor, who in the course of half an hour drove up as usual in a plain open carriage with a pair of horses, accompanied by his eldest son. They stopped opposite to us, threw off their cloaks, and appeared in the same uniform as the officers in attendance: an aide-de-camp brought the Emperor his horse, which he mounted, and his son following his example, he saluted right and left, and rode on, followed by the *Gardes à cheval*. As they disappeared under the arch of the Etat Major, the Empress with her three daughters turned into the street, at the other end, and passed down it in a handsome open carriage-and-four, with two postillions in English style, followed by two outriders dressed exactly like the postillions, in blue-and-silver jackets, and velvet caps, and escorted by a party of officers of the *Chevaliers Gardes*. The evening was exceedingly fine, and the scene was altogether very gay and lively.

As it was known that the Emperor would mount his horse in that spot, a great crowd was assembled to see him: and I could not help being struck by the manner in which he was received, though I am told it was exactly in accordance with his own wishes.

In England, the air would have been rent on such an occasion, by the cheers with which a popular Sovereign,—and such the Emperor undoubtedly is, especially in Petersburg,—would have been received; here all was calm and silent: every head was uncovered, but neither hat nor handkerchief was waved in the air, and to have waved one, or to have uttered a shout, would undoubtedly have been considered a gross breach of etiquette, and the enthusiasm of the offender would have been quickly checked by the police. Nothing can be more graceful and dignified than the manner in which the Emperor acknowledges the salutes which he receives as he drives about; he has the royal talent of appearing to direct his attention to each individual in particular, and he never fails to return every salute, even that of a private soldier. With the promenade of Sunday, the public festivities of Easter concluded; yesterday, the exhibitions and *katchellies* ceased, and workmen are now busily employed in removing the booths and clearing the ground.

The unreasonable number of holydays in this country is a severe tax on industry, and a serious bar to the advancement and prosperity of the people, who, partly from inclination, and partly from superstition, hold it their bounden duty to spend every important saint's day in total idleness: and a reform in this point would be as difficult to effect with the Russian, as it would be to persuade John Bull to live

for half the year on black bread and quass<sup>kvass</sup>, if beef and beer were within his reach. The Emperor Paul dis canonized a considerable number of saints; but there were some whose fêtes, though he much desired it, even he did not venture to attack, and others, from the strong popular feeling on the subject, he found himself compelled to re-instate, after having struck their names out of the calendar. The difficulty of meddling with saints' days, forms the principal obstacle to the introduction of the new style into Russia: the advantage of this change is obvious to all, but were it carried into effect, I am told that a schism in the church would be the almost certain result. Bigotry and superstition are powerful opponents to civilization and improvement.

The snow is now all gone, and dust is beginning to fly in the streets; the Neva, however, is still frozen over, but the ice is beginning to weaken, and yesterday, barriers were erected to prevent horses and carriages from going upon it; foot passengers, however, still venture, and the river is not expected to break up for some days.

## LETTER XXIII.

Breaking up of the ice—Ice from the Ladoga—Placing a pillar in the church of St. Isaac—Grand parade—Arrival of the Emperor ; of the Empress—Review of the troops—Departure of the Court from St. Petersburg—Interview with the Empress.

*Petersburg, May 9, 1838.*

EVER since the conclusion of Easter-week, until yesterday, we have had delightful weather. On the morning of the twenty-eighth of last month, eighteen days after the commencement of the thaw, the ice on the Neva broke up, the floating-bridge was removed to let it pass, and in the course of three or four hours, the river was sufficiently free to allow the safe passage of boats ; indeed, scarcely a piece of ice was to be seen. No boats, however, are allowed to ply until the following ceremony, which dates from the reign of Peter the Great, has been performed. The Commandant of the fortress, under a salute from its guns, crosses the river in his barge, and has an audience of the Emperor, to present him with a certain silver cup, filled with the water of the Neva ; and his Majesty returns the cup



filled, instead of water, with gold coins. After this the navigation of the Neva is considered as open.

The ice in the Gulf of Finland is still firm; and since yesterday, the Neva, which for ten days past had reflected nothing but blue sky and bright sun, has put on again a wintry appearance, being entirely covered with floating ice, as white as snow, drifting rapidly down under the united influence of wind and current. This ice comes from the Ladoga, a lake more than two hundred miles long, and a hundred and fifty broad, out of which the Neva issues forty or fifty miles above Petersburg.

Some days ago, I went to see a pillar placed in the new church of St. Isaac, which is now in progress. The operation was extremely interesting, from the size of the pillar, and the height at which it was placed; it being the second tier or story of columns on which they were engaged. The last pillar was erected yesterday, and the colonnade, which is circular, is now complete. Its base must be a hundred and thirty or forty feet from the ground, and each pillar is a solid block of granite, forty-two feet high, and weighing five thousand poods, or upwards of eighty tons. The columns on the ground-tier, each of which is also a single stone, are fifty-six feet high, and weigh eleven thousand poods each.

When I reached the platform to which the pillar was to be raised, I had below me a panorama of

Petersburg, and the country around, for many a mile; the most interesting part of the prospect being the Gulf of Finland, down which I could see as far as Cronstadt. The day was warm and bright, and the air free from cloud or smoke. From the platform down to the next stage, a depth of about eighty feet, was fixed a strong timber frame, covered with planks, so as to form a very steep inclined plane. At the bottom of this slide, when I first looked down, the column to be raised was lying horizontally on rollers; it was girthed round with very thick ropes drawn very tight, and padded underneath. Other ropes, or rather cables, secured to these girths, passed lengthways, along the column, crossing each other over its lower end; and it was lashed to strong planks which lay under it, that the polish of the stone might not be injured in ascending the slide. Over the base on which the column was to stand was placed a high frame-work of strong timbers. The cables, twelve in number, attached to the pillar, passed through blocks fixed in the frame, and with the aid of one moveable pulley to each, were drawn by twelve capstans, each manned by fourteen or sixteen men. There were two extra capstans for the purpose of guiding the lower end of the pillar when suspended in the air. Altogether, upwards of two hundred men were employed in the operation.

When all was ready, the capstans began to turn,

and by degrees, the column, instead of lying in a horizontal position, rested on the inclined plane, which was well greased, and began slowly to ascend, two men standing on its upper end, to be ready in case of the cables becoming entangled. The capstans were all numbered, and the superintendent at the top, by calling out sometimes to one gang, and sometimes to another, to move faster or slower, kept all the ropes drawing equally. The column, at length, reached the top of the inclined plane, and it was then raised until it was hanging in the high wooden frame exactly over the base on which it was to stand. A coin was dropped into a small hole in the centre of the base, which was then covered with a sheet of lead; and the tackling round the lower end of the pillar being cut and cleared away, it was lowered gently into its place. The whole operation, which was now complete, occupied about two hours from the time the capstans began to work, until the pillar rested upon its base.

The church of St. Isaac will be an edifice not unworthy of the City of Palaces, as Petersburg is sometimes appropriately called; and, in its way, it will probably be an unique monument of a century, which certainly is not an age of cathedral building. About forty thousand pounds have been annually expended upon it for some years past, and the exterior will not be completed for at least two more. The church is to be a few feet higher than

St. Paul's, with a dome, the roof of which is to be gilt, of nearly the same size with the dome of that cathedral. No materials are employed in any part of the edifice but marble, stone, brick, and metal, so that the building will be fire-proof.

Four days ago, we had the good fortune to witness in the Champ-de-Mars a splendid parade. About forty thousand men were on the ground, including nine thousand cavalry, one hundred and twenty eight pieces of artillery, and a pontoon-train: the whole belonging to the corps of the Imperial Guards, and forming, therefore, I presume, the finest body of troops in the empire. The day was lovely, and the *coup-d'œil* most superb. At twelve o'clock, the Emperor arrived on the ground, followed by a numerous suite. The drums beat, and the troops cheered as he galloped down the line, and through the ranks, and by the time he had completed this rapid inspection, his horse being already covered with foam, the Empress and Grand Duchesses arrived on the ground in a carriage-and-four, with postillions, in the English style, followed by four or five other court-carriages, some with four, and some with six horses. The Emperor mounted a fresh horse, and rode through the ranks by the side of her Majesty's carriage, which was then drawn up opposite the centre of the line. The Emperor took his station on horseback by her side, and the troops began to march past. The infantry passed first, preceded

only by the mounted Circassians, or, as they are termed, the Mamelukes of the Guard, in number about forty or fifty. These wear scarlet uniforms, made after the fashion of their country, and are a wild and picturesque-looking body of men. Some are armed with carbines, and some have bows and arrows at their backs.

The infantry was followed by a train of foot-artillery; after which there was a halt for a few minutes, and then the cavalry came up, led by the regiment of Chevaliers-gardes, with their Colonel, the Grand Duke Alexander, the heir-apparent, at their head. The band of each regiment stationed itself opposite the Emperor, and played while the regiment marched past, and each company or troop as it came up saluted the Emperor with a shout, according to the Russian custom: as soon as the regiment had been reviewed, the Colonel was called up and complimented by the Emperor.

There were four regiments of Cuirassiers, a portion of each being Lancers; a regiment of Horse Grenadiers; a splendid regiment of Hussars of the Guard, in scarlet uniforms, and mounted on greys: and these were followed by Lancers, Cossacks, and a superb train of Horse Artillery; the whole force being wound up by the Pontoon Train, which I have mentioned.

After a halt for a few minutes, the whole of the troops passed a second time before the Emperor, the

Infantry at double-quick, after which they marched off the ground, and the Cavalry at a trot or hand-gallop. The review was to have concluded with a grand charge of Cavalry, but this manœuvre was countermanded, in consequence of the number of accidents which had occurred at a sort of rehearsal a few days before, on which occasion fourteen officers got falls, and were more or less hurt; and one of them having been ridden over by a squadron, was so much injured, as to render his recovery doubtful.

The Emperor was highly pleased by this review, and a bounty was proclaimed to every soldier who had taken part in it, of three roubles, three glasses of brandy, and three pounds of meat.

The immense plains in the south of Russia furnish most of the horses, for the Cavalry, which is exceedingly well mounted, and the horses of each corps beautifully matched. The price allowed for troopers does not exceed two or three hundred roubles per horse, but the commission to purchase them is given to officers of good fortune, who are glad to obtain leave of absence on this ground, and to purchase good horses, making up out of their own pockets the difference between the Government allowance and the actual cost.

This review is the finale of the Petersburg season, as the court will shortly be dispersed; the Empress starts in a few days for Germany, and the Emperor will soon follow her; the Grand Duchesses will

spend the Summer at Tzarsko Celo, or Peterhof, and the heir-apparent will perform a foreign tour. In Easter-week M—— had a private interview with the Empress, who received her at the palace with great kindness and affability; and a few days ago I had the honour of a short conversation with Her Majesty, who met us when she was walking with the Grand Duchess Mary, in the Public Gardens, and recognizing M——, stopped very graciously to talk to us for a few minutes.



## LETTER XXIV.

Opening of the navigation—Visit to the Academy of Fine Arts—The president—The destruction of Pompeii by Brilloff—Young Kotzebue—Manufactory of tapestry—Malachite Temple—Public Library—The MSS.—Writing of Mary Queen of Scots—Autographs—Letter from Henrietta, Queen of Charles I.—Expedition to Tzarsko Celo by the rail-road—Conclusion of the letters.

*St. Petersburg, May 22nd, 1838.*

Two days ago the first steam-boats of this season, from Lubeck, came into Cronstadt; one of them had been due ten days, but had been unable to make its way earlier through the ice. However, as the navigation of the Gulf of Finland is at last open, I presume we may consider the winter as fairly at an end in spite of the Ladoga ice, which still\* continues at intervals to float thickly past. Great numbers of people have been long waiting with impatience to commence a summer-trip abroad in search of health or pleasure, and the two steam-boats which will sail for Lubeck to-morrow and the next day, will be

\* The last ice came down on the 26th of May; the leaves on the lime-trees did not open till about the 1st of June.

crowded with passengers. We have changed our plan of leaving Petersburg by the earliest opportunity, but we shall not linger here much longer, and this is probably the last letter which you will receive from this end of the Baltic: I hope its waves will be tolerably peaceful for a few days, as though we do not put to sea ourselves to-morrow, some friends, in whom we are particularly interested, will be passengers in the *Naslednick*.

Among the lions which we have lately been visiting, are the Public Library of Petersburg, and the Academy of Fine Arts, of which M——'s uncle, Mr. Olénine,\* is president. He is one of the most distinguished literary men in Russia, was private secretary to the late Emperor, and has been for many years high in office. His house is well known to most foreigners who have visited St. Petersburg; and we at least have spent in it many of our most agreeable hours.

The object of greatest interest in the Academy, at present, is a large historical picture, by the Russian painter, Brilloff. The subject is the destruction of Pompeii, and the picture was painted in Italy; it was presented to the Academy by M. Demideff, who

\* Tradition says, that this family came originally from Ireland, and they suppose the name to be a corruption of O'Neill. A certain degree of fable is, however, mingled in the history, as the Hibernian Ancestress is said to have been borne across the sea by a bear, in commemoration of which remarkable circumstance, a bear carrying a lady, appears at this day in their coat of arms.

purchased it from the artist for thirty-five thousand roubles, about fifteen hundred pounds. The general effect of this picture on the eye, at a first glance, is disagreeable, from the nature of the subject, and the glare of colouring which belongs to such a scene; the hot falling cinders, moreover, have the appearance of a shower of blood. The conception of the picture, however, shows no ordinary genius, and the expressions and attitudes of the figures and faces are beautifully imagined and admirably painted. The most striking figures are those of an old man borne in the arms of his son, and a woman stretched dead or dying in the foreground, with black hair streaming on the pavement; she has apparently been thrown out of a chariot, of which the axle is broken, and the horses are rushing wildly away; next to these is a family group, including a mother with an infant in her arms, which is unconscious of the danger, and stretches out its hands to catch a small bird fluttering on the ground. Lastly, at the left side of the picture appears a group of Christians, as is evident from a cross hung round the neck of one: their resigned, though awe-struck faces, and their attitudes of prayer, are finely contrasted with the terror and despair expressed on the faces and forms which surround them. The portrait of Brilloff himself is to be seen behind the Christians in a man who carries the implements of a painter on his head. The architectural parts of this picture are not as well drawn as

the figures ; at the right hand there are three statues intended to be tottering on the parapet of a high building, but which look as if, in bathing language, they were preparing to take "headers" into the midst of the crowd below.

In walking through the rooms of the Academy, we found a young artist copying a picture, the details of which, it being a battle-piece, he was extremely civil in explaining, as well as in answering other questions ; and we found afterwards that he was a son of the famous Kotzebue, who was sent to Siberia (by mistake) by the Emperor Paul.

As I am now on the subject of works of art, I must mention, though they have nothing to do with the Academy, the productions of the Imperial manufactory of tapestry in Petersburg. It is on the plan, I believe, of the Gobelins at Paris, and is now in full operation, preparing carpets and hangings for the Winter Palace. The carpets are exceedingly rich and splendid, chiefly in the French style. The tapestry, however, is of course more curious, and it is exceedingly beautiful. One or two pictures which have been copied, or are now in progress, have quite the effect of paintings at a little distance. The best of those which we saw, is a picture of Alexander the Great, receiving the family of Darius.

Another splendid work of art which we have lately seen, is a temple destined to be placed in the Church of St. Isaac, and which in the meantime stands for

safety in the large hall of the Tauride, which serves at present as a receptacle for the furniture saved from the Winter Palace. The temple consists of a dome about seven feet in diameter, supported on eight Corinthian pillars about eight feet high. The exterior of the dome is covered with a profusion of gilding on a ground of malachite, and the interior is of lapis lazuli, the pillars are of malachite, with gilt bases and capitals; the floor is of polished stone of various colours; and the whole is raised on steps of polished porphyry. There is, perhaps, altogether too much gilding about this very beautiful work, but this is much in accordance with its destined position in a Greek church. It was presented to the Emperor by M. Demideff, who procured the malachite from his mines in Siberia, and sent it to Italy to be worked. Malachite is, as you probably are aware, a stone peculiar to the copper mines of Siberia: it is of the colour of verdigris marbled, and bears evident marks of having once been in a state of fusion.

In the visit of which I have spoken to the Public Library, I was chiefly interested by the collection of MSS., some of the most remarkable of which were pointed out to me by Mr. Atkinson, the Librarian, who was kind enough to accompany me over the whole institution. The Library contains about four hundred thousand volumes, a considerable part of which were acquired by right of might, having been

transferred to Petersburg from the Public Library at Warsaw. There are about forty thousand volumes of MSS.

Among others which I examined, is a missal which was purchased in France, and which formerly belonged to Mary Queen of Scots: it is quite perfect, except that in the illuminations with which it is abundantly ornamented, there have once been numerous coats of arms, every one of which, from the beginning of the book to the end, has been carefully erased, and the shield left vacant. It is difficult to guess with what object this has been done, as no other mutilation is apparent. The chief interest of this missal lies in numerous scraps of the Queen's hand-writing which are to be found in it, breathing in general of her unhappy fortunes, though it must be owned, much cannot be said in favour of her poetry, the exact meaning of which is not always very clear. Near the beginning is written across the bottom of two pages, *Ce livre est a moi, Marie reine, 1553.*\*

In another page are written the following lines in the Queen's hand.

*Un cœur que l'outrage martire,  
Par un mepris ou d'un refus,  
A le pouvoir de faire dire,  
Je ne suis pas ce que ie fus.*

*Marie.*

\* The last figure is very indistinct, but it appears to be a 3.

In another place, in the same writing, are these verses :—

*Qui jamais davantage eust contraire le sort,  
Si la vie n'est moins utile que la mort,  
Et plus tost que chager\* de mes maus l'aventure,  
Chacun\* change pour moi d'humeur et de nature.*

*Marie R.*

Below these lines, the Queen has scrawled a memorandum, "*escrire au Secretaire pour Douglas.*" I was afterwards shewn, in a collection of original letters, one from Mary to the King of France, written during her imprisonment, in which, addressing the King, as *Monsieur Mon Frere*, and signing herself *votre bonne sœur Marie*, she speaks of Douglas, recommending him to the future favour of his most Christian Majesty; whom she at the same time thanks for his attention to her former request in behalf of the same person. In another letter from Fotheringay Castle, the unhappy Queen expresses her too-well-grounded fear of never being released from prison. This collection includes autographs of Henry the Seventh, Henry the Eighth, Elizabeth, James the First, Charles the First and his Queen Henrietta, with those of many distinguished persons; among others, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in whose hand are two or three letters to the King of France, expressing the deepest gratitude and devotion to his Most Christian Majesty, and entreating for a continuance of his favour. I am afraid Queen

\* Both these words are thus written.



Elizabeth would not have been altogether pleased with the tone of these epistles. Among the most interesting letters, was a long one dated at St. Germain, from Henrietta, Queen of Charles the First, to the *Sieur Grignon*, begging him, if possible, to procure from *the Speakers of the two Houses and the General*, a pass for herself and her attendants, to enable her to visit her husband in England, and to remain with him as long as can be permitted. The Queen expresses her fears that this pass will be refused, but she reminds the *Sieur Grignon* how much she has the object at heart, and assures him of her eternal gratitude if he succeeds. She then offers to make out for the inspection of the *Speakers and the General*, a list of the attendants whom she proposes to bring with her, in order that the name of any person, to whom they object, may be omitted in the pass.

With these short extracts, I will conclude my letter; nor will I detail to you an expedition which we made lately by the rail-road with some Russian friends to *Tzarsko Celo*, where we saw all that is to be seen,—the armoury, which is well arranged,—the park, which boasts of no fine trees,—and the palace itself, which is magnificent. The saloon, the walls of which are entirely encrusted with amber, is celebrated, and is not only curious, but beautiful. The floors are exquisite throughout; nor am I sure that the famous *parquet*, which is ornamented by inlaid bouquets of

mother-of-pearl, was the one I most admired. One room has a most singular appearance, from the walls being entirely covered to a certain depth with paintings of all sizes, without frames, fitted into one another like a puzzle: the variety of size and colouring of the paintings gives to the whole rather the appearance of patchwork. The inn at which the rail-road train set us down, is about two versts from the palace, to which we went in an omnibus, and returned in the same manner; and after a very merry dinner, in spite of our number, which was thirteen, we embarked again on the rail-road, and steamed rapidly back to Petersburg, a distance of about sixteen miles.

Much as we have had reason to enjoy our visit to Russia, we are not sorry to feel ourselves on the eve of our return; and we shall not appreciate the merits of England the less, by comparing it with the scenes we are now about to quit.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

ON

## RUSSIA.

Acknowledgment of Russian kindness and hospitality.—SYSTEM OF EDUCATING BOYS—In public institutions—At home—Nature of their studies—Foreign preceptors—Amusements—Treatment of children—Military discipline—Village quarters—The young ladies—Results of early marriages—Servants—Russian opinions of justice—Anecdote.—THE GREEK CHURCH—Its doctrines and practices—The clergy—The fasts—Tendency of the system—Religious tolerance—Children must always be Greeks if either parent is of that church.—PETERSBURG NOT RUSSIA—Character of the peasant—Of the tradesman—Commercial spirit pervading all classes.—PROSPECTS OF RUSSIA—Probable effects of a political change—Want of independent classes—Light in which the Emperor is viewed by his subjects—Public functionaries—Their motives of action—Suspensions of Government—Tend to deter Russia from foreign aggression—Opinions of four distinguished generals on the power of Russia, offensive and defensive—Reasons why disturbances should be apprehended in Russia—Elements of Revolution—The conscription—Natural results of a revolution—Bloodshed and violence—Domestic servants—The revolt of the military colonies—Intrepid behaviour of the Emperor—Famine—The present system bad—A change likely to be worse—Importance of the life of the Emperor to his country—Character of the Emperor.

IN adding to the preceding series of letters a few general remarks on Russia, I feel reluctant to censure in any degree a country which, were I to describe it merely as it presented itself to me, and

according to the treatment which I every where experienced from its inhabitants, would certainly be depicted by me under the influence of most favourable impressions. I should be extremely ungrateful were I not to acknowledge the very great kindness and hospitality which was shown to us by those whom it was the immediate object of our journey to visit, and which I often felt exceeded our natural claim upon them as relatives and foreigners: we also every where met with much attention and civility from those strangers with whom we became acquainted.

In the following remarks, I shall endeavour carefully to avoid all points which might affect private feelings, should this book ever fall into the hands of any Russian friend.

To begin with the subject of education. Nothing, I imagine, can be worse than the system usually pursued with Russian boys. The commencement of their education is often so long deferred, that their minds are unopened from want of employment. I have more than once heard the opinion laid down, that no child ought to be tormented with lessons until it is seven years old. The boys generally remain much too long under female government, often until they are thirteen, or even fifteen years old; and the whole system of their management tending to check the growth of manly ideas, they remain children until they are almost men.

The discipline at all the public institutions or academies is military, whether the pupils are intended for the army or for civil professions; at these, therefore, a boy is allowed to think but little for himself; and if he is brought up at home, the usual system with those who can afford the expense of private tutors, he never feels the necessity of making his own way, or of acting for himself. A boy brought up at home runs every risk, either of being thoroughly spoiled, or of regarding his home as a school, and his parents as schoolmasters; he looks forward with impatience to the time when he will be released from domestic thralldom, and placed at liberty in the world, into which he is launched at length in the defenceless state of utter ignorance and inexperience, unprepared to guard against its temptations and seductions, heightened as they are by the dangerous charm of perfect novelty.

As to the acquirements which a Russian education professes to bestow, a knowledge of French, and, to a certain extent, German, with a little History, Geography, and Arithmetic, form pretty nearly the sum total. French, indeed, is learned and spoken from the cradle, and children often know it as well as their mother tongue: the knowledge, however, of these languages is not always followed up by much acquaintance with their literature. To French and German, English is sometimes added, but perfection in it is rare. The preceptors, who are engaged in

the houses of Russian gentlemen, are almost invariably foreigners, and their time is chiefly occupied in teaching modern languages; a classical education is nearly unheard of.

The Russian boy is utterly unaccustomed to hardy and manly amusements; athletic games appear to be almost unknown, and he in general never mounts a horse till he is grown up, or nearly so, when he learns to ride, if he learns at all, in a riding-school; and he would be surprised to see many a little English lad of seven or eight years old galloping his poney, and perfectly at ease upon his back, having learned to sit fast by meeting with a harmless tumble or two at the beginning.

The Russians dine early, and their children, from two or three years old,\* almost invariably dine with them; the consequence is, that they are accustomed to eat of all the dishes which are handed round, many of which, of course, are highly improper for them, and the effects of the diet are generally visible in their pale and unhealthy looks. What is much worse, however, is the conversation to which they listen at table; the parents may take care to avoid all topics which are unsuited to the ears of children, but they cannot exercise a similar control over their

\* The young children are attended by nurses, who never appear to leave them for a moment. Nothing is more common than for a nurse to dine with her master and mistress and their guests, if the party is small and private.

guests, who make remarks upon the conduct of their neighbours, and discuss the usual subjects of gossip and scandal without much attention to the moral lessons which they may be giving to the children at table with them.

In most countries every one has a general idea of his neighbour's fortune; but in Russia, where the fortunes consist in slaves, the number of which on each estate is registered, the calculations can be made with great nicety. Every child knows, for it is a piece of information which servants do not fail to instil into them from a very early age, how many peasants his father has, and how many of them will fall to his own share; they therefore, from their infancy, look upon themselves as beings of a superior class, born to lord it over their serfs. At the age of eighteen or nineteen the young Russian, in the majority of cases, enters the army, and from the moment he is fairly embarked in the service, he is harassed and fatigued to death with drilling and exercising from morning till night. He has scarcely a leisure moment for improving his mind, if he wishes it, and he probably spends the best years of his life in complete banishment, quartered in a wretched country village in a peasant's house, with no society but that of a few comrades, whose thoughts do not extend beyond the pleasures of drinking and smoking. It is not wonderful, if, after a few years of such an existence, his mind becomes debased; he is inca-



pable of entertaining enlightened ideas, and is almost entirely unfitted for civilized society.

The ladies in Russia are, generally speaking, very superior, both in acquirements and manners, to the men. The system of private education is suitable and proper for girls; and as they have no military service to put an end to improvement, and to exclude them from good society on their entrance into life, their minds are better cultivated in proportion than those of the young men, and their manners more polished and refined.

There is, however, an important event, which not unfrequently operates as effectually to stop the education of the young ladies, as does the commencement of a military career in the other sex. I allude to the early marriages, which, as I have observed, are often arranged by parents without consulting the inclinations of the parties most concerned. A girl is sometimes married at sixteen, and often at seventeen; from this time the cares of a family begin to fall upon her, and in the generality of cases she either devotes herself to gaiety and dissipation, or she divides her whole time between the care of her children and the management of her household, giving up the practice of any accomplishment she may have already acquired, and discontinuing every pursuit which might tend to improve her mind or increase her store of information. I have already mentioned\* the number and

\* See the conclusion of Letter IX.

variety of tasks which the mistress of a family in Russia often has to superintend; and it must be observed that little confidence can in general be placed in the servants; since, being slaves, they have only to avoid absolute punishment, and have no inducement to exert themselves beyond what is necessary for this purpose. They have no places to lose by misconduct, no advantageous situations to gain by a good character: their master is bound to support them whether they are indolent or active, sulky or obliging; and though they may be lazy, dirty, and awkward, he cannot exchange them for the better. The servants themselves well know that this is the case, and, therefore, the generality of them only try to perform their service with as little trouble as possible. They have not much work to do, for three or four Russian servants are employed where one English man would be necessary, and they spend half their time in sleeping or in playing cards: sleep, especially, never appears to come amiss to them; they can enjoy it any where or in any position, and they would certainly join most cordially with Sancho Panza in the blessings which he invoked on its inventor. It is, nevertheless, the domestic servants who chiefly feel the weight of slavery, since they are always under the master's eye, and, of course, are subject to a more galling surveillance than the ordinary serfs; they also do not so readily obtain permission to marry, since too rapid an increase to the

household numbers is by no means profitable to the master.

The system of slavery, and the military character of the Government, instil from the cradle such notions into the minds of Russians, that many of them seem unable to comprehend any true principles of impartial law or justice; a remark, the truth of which may be illustrated by the following story, which was told me by an officer, who being himself an aide-de-camp, seemed deeply impressed with the sacred character of Generals. When the Emperor was detained in the small town of Chembra in the year 1836, in consequence of his collar-bone having been broken by the overturning of his carriage, a certain General was travelling to join his Majesty. On the road he encountered a party of peasants from Little Russia, with waggons drawn by oxen; the people were resting, and the oxen were lying about and obstructing the passage; the carriage was therefore stopped, and the *istvostchiks* called out to the peasants to clear the way instantly for the General, who was in a hurry. The Little Russians, however, who, it seems, are an obstinate independent race, showed no alacrity in obeying these peremptory orders; the General, therefore, put his head out of his carriage, and told his servant to get down, and take a stick to the peasants if they did not make haste and drive their beasts out of the way. The servant did as he was ordered, and

began to use his stick, trusting to the servility and terror of his superiors, which is ordinarily impressed upon a Russian peasant from his birth. On this occasion, however, the people, to the number of thirty or forty, not choosing to submit to such treatment, pulled his Excellency out of the carriage, insulted him, and dragged him about, without however, doing him any serious harm, and in the end they allowed him to proceed on his journey. "This," said the narrator, in a tone of the utmost indignation, "was done to a General—actually a General! things must be come to a pretty pass, when a General can be treated in such a manner." I asked how these peasants were punished, and he replied, in a tone of triumph, that they were all sent to Siberia. In which case the unfortunate men were treated with this extreme severity, not for obstructing the highway, or assaulting peaceable travellers, but for touching the person of a man of rank, knowing him to be such; as they were not soldiers, their assault could not be construed into an act of mutiny, though this was evidently the light in which the person who told the story, regarded it; and, I think, that the approbation of their fate, and the horror for their crime which he expressed, would be a very general feeling amongst the upper-classes in Russia.

The Greek church has many points of resemblance with the Roman: it holds the doctrine of the real

presence, and authorises the worship of saints and the adoration of images and relics; it also appoints prayers for the dead, though it does not admit the belief in purgatory. In the administration of the sacrament to the laity, the bread is dipped in the wine, and administered with a spoon; the priests receive the elements separately; as does also the Emperor, the supreme head of the church. Confession to the priest is a necessary preliminary to taking the sacrament, which must always be received fasting; a priest, therefore, is required to celebrate mass fasting, since he receives the sacrament during that service. The sacrament is administered periodically to infants up to the age of seven years; after which, they cannot receive it till they are thirteen or fourteen, or, in other words, old enough to make a confession. The language in which service is performed in the church, is the Slavon, which, though the origin of the Russian, is by no means universally understood. The Greeks allow the free use of the Bible, and they disapprove of the celibacy of the clergy. A deacon cannot be ordained priest until he is married, and if his wife dies before he is a priest, he must continue all his life in the inferior order, as no ecclesiastic can marry a second time: these unfortunate widowers, as well as priests who lose their wives, often become monks. A portion of land in every country parish is allotted to the priest, deacon, and four sacristans.

half of it falls to the share of the priest, who has, in addition, fees for marriages, baptisms, and burials, and he sometimes receives presents on other occasions ; a small pension is allotted to his widow, if he leaves one. The ordinary dress of the priests is a caftan, or long coat, made like a dressing-gown, and fastened round the waist by a sash. The material is cloth, stuff, or sometimes silk, and the colour anything but black, which they are prohibited from using. The caftan in winter is lined with fur, and they wear high fur caps, which in summer are replaced by broad-brimmed hats. They never shave their beards, or cut their hair, which is parted on the top of the head, and hangs down upon their shoulders. In towns, they are usually seen walking with long canes in their hands.

The priests, and still more the bishops, in Russia, are in a false position ; their hands are kissed, and they are treated with a vast deal of outward ceremony, while at the same time their influence is but small, and even the highest dignitaries appear to possess little real weight or consideration. This probably arises from the poverty of the clergy, whose condition is often but little superior to that of the peasants, and also from their being a class apart, the son generally following the profession of his father, and priests' daughters intermarrying chiefly with priests : in all towns there are ecclesiastical seminaries for the gratuitous education of their sons. None

but monks, as I have before mentioned, can become bishops.

In the Greek Church there are four great fasts in the year, namely :—

1. Lent, which lasts six weeks, commencing on the Monday before Ash Wednesday; the preceding week, moreover, being to a certain degree a fast.

2. A fast in June, which varies in duration from a fortnight to a month.

3. A fast from the 1st to the 14th of August.

4. A fast during the six weeks preceding Christmas.

In addition to these periods, Wednesdays and Fridays are fast-days all the year round, as are also the eves of certain saints' days. No marriages can be performed on a Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday; nor during any of the great fasts; or during Easter week, or the week preceding Lent.

The natural tendency of this system of religion, with its numberless ceremonies, its points of faith resting on tradition, its worship of saints, its adoration of relics, and its miraculous images, evidently is to engender superstition, which, undoubtedly is very prevalent, and not always confined merely to the illiterate classes. The people are neither accustomed nor encouraged to search things to the bottom; their Government requires obedience and not discussion; their Church demands submission, and not reasoning.

The Russians are in the habit of boasting much of



the toleration of their laws in all religious matters ; indeed, they frequently carry this principle too far ; since I have often heard them remark, what does it matter whether we are Greeks or Protestants ? we are all equally Christians. The fundamental doctrines, undoubtedly, are the same ; but, surely, no Protestant would consider it a matter of indifference, whether he avoided or not the grievous errors which he attributes to the Greek and Roman Churches. This ultra-liberalism, however, is but a loose way of talking, and is limited to mere words, for the toleration which actually prevails is not altogether unbounded. No religion, it is true, legally disqualifies a man from holding any office ;\* and I am convinced, that the uncharitable idea, that none but the members of his own church are within the pale of salvation, does not exist in a Russian mind ; but, nevertheless, no marriage can be celebrated between a Russian subject of the Established Church, and a person of any other religion, until an undertaking has been signed by the dissenting party, whether it be the husband or the wife, that all the issue of the marriage shall be brought up in the Greek faith ; a law which almost entirely acts as a bar to such unions, since few persons would consent that all their children should be educated in the belief of doctrines which they themselves regard as wholly erroneous.

\* For instance, Count Nesselrode, the chancellor of the empire, is a member of the English Established Church.

Foreigners in Russia are commonly told “Petersburg is not Russia; if you wish to see Russians as they really are, you must look for them at Moscow, or in the interior of the country.” This often-repeated phrase undoubtedly contains some truth; for the strong mixture of strangers in the population of Petersburg must produce a great effect on the habits of the place. The whole number of inhabitants is about four hundred thousand, and of these no less than sixty thousand are Germans, subjects, it is true, for the most part, of the Emperor, but still perfectly distinct in language, habits, and religious opinions from the Russians. Of English residents, there are about two thousand, and the number of French is very considerable. Besides this, Petersburg is not only the capital of the Empire, and, therefore, the centre of wealth and luxury, the spot where civilization proceeds most rapidly, and where changes first appear, but it is also what it is often called, namely, the window through which Russia looks at Europe; and it may be added, it is also the door by which Europe and European ideas and habits enter Russia. For these reasons it is even more necessary in this than in other countries, for those who wish to learn the national character, and to witness national customs, to seek them in the interior, and not in the capital.

The Russian peasant is rude and ignorant, but he is endowed with a high degree of natural shrewdness

and ingenuity, and I have more than once had occasion to admire, not only his readiness to give assistance in a difficulty,\* but also his handy and efficient mode of proceeding to work on the occasion. Good humour, and a gay obliging disposition, are among the leading traits of his character; while his aptitude to acquire any art, and his genius for imitation, are sufficiently attested by the manufactories which are carried on in every part of the country by the hands of the peasants born on the spot. Like all uncivilized men, the Russian peasant is inclined to pilfer; but open robbery or acts of violence are very rare, and one may travel unarmed in perfect security through the Empire.

The ordinary Russian tradesman is generally mean and dishonest in the highest degree; he begins by asking for his goods often twice what he eventually takes, and he will, whenever it is possible, impose an inferior article on his customer, of whom, with short-sighted cunning, he endeavours to make the most at present, instead of tempting him, by fair dealing, to return another time to his shop. A spirit of trade runs through all ranks of the community: the peasant is forced to be a trader, because he is paid for his labour in land, of which he must sell, to the best

\* Yet, owing to an apparently absurd police regulation at Petersburg, and also at Moscow, if a person breaks his leg in the street, or meets with any other accident, no one, as I am assured, will give him a helping hand, or render the slightest aid till the police arrive.

advantage, the superfluous produce; the class above the peasant are traders by profession; and the noble endeavours to increase his fortune, and to make up for the small returns of his land, by establishing the rural manufactories of which I have often spoken.

It is difficult to perceive how Russia, under her present circumstances, can advance much further in civilization. Her iron despotism, her superstition, and her system of slavery are suited only to a state of darkness and semibarbarism among the mass of the people, a condition from which it is hardly to be desired that they should emerge, since with light would of course arise a keener perception of grievances and a thirst for change; and it seems impossible that the country should attain to the blessings of freedom, and liberal institutions, without passing through the ordeal of a fierce and bloody revolution; and if the present order of things were once shaken, it must be very long before the government of the empire, and public credit could be re-established on a firm and stable footing. In fact, Russia appears to contain no elements for a free government on sound principles, and a revolution would be likely to produce nothing but a state of anarchy and confusion, such as that of the wretched South American Republics. There is no independent class in the country, unless the traders may be so considered; but they are uneducated, narrow-minded, and superstitious in the extreme; and they

form, moreover, numerically, but a very small proportion of the community. Influence or authority, not conferred by the Emperor's commission, is an idea which few Russians at all comprehend; the empire is indeed but a vast army, of which the Emperor is General-in-Chief, unless, *parvis componere magna*, it is regarded as a great school, of which he is Head Master. This indeed, though the comparison may not be very dignified, is really much the light in which his Imperial Majesty appears to be regarded in his dominions. Wherever he is expected to pass, Institutions are put in order, roads are repaired, and bridges mended, on which the rest of the world might have broken their necks unnoticed; and, in short, the same sort of effect is produced as that which, in a school-room, generally follows the intimation that "—— is coming!" when noise ceases, books are opened, every one slips quietly into his place, endeavouring to look as if he had never been out of it, and the most disorderly are, of course, most careful to put on a studious and attentive demeanour. In Russia, where public opinion is almost unknown, public spirit cannot be expected to show itself on ordinary occasions, though that it does exist, and only requires circumstances to call it into play, was sufficiently proved at the period of the French invasion. Functionaries, therefore, of all classes, military and civil, high and low, must generally be expected to act, not so much with a view to the public good,

or even to the attainment of popularity and reputation, as with the object of attracting the favourable notice of the Emperor, the only source of honour, promotion, and reward.

The Government perpetually betrays an apprehension of revolt and conspiracy, which would seem to show that the basis is not felt to be very secure, on which the internal peace and tranquillity of the Empire rests; and this position must, of itself, operate strongly to restrain Russia from any acts of aggression against other countries, lest the increase of burdens should arouse discontent, and the absence of troops on foreign service encourage revolt at home.

I have heard it asserted, on good authority, that some time ago four general officers, namely, Marshal Marmont in France, the Archduke Ferdinand in Austria, General Wrede in Bavaria, and the Duke of Wellington in England, were requested to furnish to their respective Governments their opinions as to the power of Russia, offensive and defensive, as invading Europe or resisting invasion at home. The opinions of these four distinguished personages were unanimous, to the effect that Russia as an invader would be weak, from the impossibility of organizing a sufficient commissariat, or of maintaining her troops when beyond her own territory; but that, on the other hand, if invaded, she would be impregnable, from her immense extent of frontier, and from the very

large bodies of men which she could immediately oppose to the invaders, at whatever point the attack was made, her climate being also an insurmountable obstacle.

To return from this digression, it is not surprising that the Russian Government should be apprehensive of political disturbances, for the country has a formidable body of natural enemies to the present order of things, in her twenty-two millions of male serfs, who are, indeed, at present, exceedingly tranquil, like the contents of a well-guarded powder-magazine, but who may some day, by a sudden explosion, overthrow the empire. Nor are there wanting those who would willingly seize an opportunity to fire the train; there are discontented nobles to raise the standard of rebellion, and there are sectarians as well inclined to subvert the established Government as the established religion. Let these at a favorable moment proclaim freedom to the serfs, and it is hardly to be expected that they would not accept the offer. The Russian peasant is too unenlightened to appreciate the real blessings of liberty, but he would readily comprehend the advantage of not being compelled to labour three days in the week for his master; although, in point of fact, by so doing, he merely pays the rent of the land which he occupies himself. Great, however, as this temptation would be, a greater still might be held out to him in a release from the terrors of the conscription, which is,



in truth, the most pressing evil of his lot, and the one most dreaded by him.

It is to him what, according to the old Scotch superstition, "the teind to hell" was to the fairies; and, as in their case, the victim was "fat and fair of flesh," so the conscript must be young, strong, and healthy, and in short, one of the most able and useful members of his family. Every domestic tie is severed for him who becomes a Russian soldier, as much almost as if he were dead; his home is lost; his wife a widow; his children are orphans; his parents childless; and he is twice as much a slave as he was before. The Emperor is become his master; and when he is enlisted, he knows not where or what his service will be—whether by sea or by land—whether that of a soldier or a sailor. The generality, it is true, of the recruits soon become reconciled to their lot, for their disposition is easy, and being fatalists, they consider that they are only fulfilling their destiny; but, nevertheless, the diseases\* which they counterfeit, and still more, the mutilations which they often inflict upon themselves, in the hope of being thus incapacitated for the service, prove the dread of being forced into it.

\* This is a very common plan with the conscripts: they pretend to be subject to fits, and counterfeit other attacks, the existence of which is not easily disproved; and men have been known to chop off their fingers with an axe, and even to inflict upon themselves still more dreadful mutilations, in order to escape the conscription.

Should any inducements be successful in exciting the people to revolt, the first result of the overthrow of the present order of things would undoubtedly be a reign of terror, in the massacres and other acts of violence which must be expected from a population in the depths of ignorance, suddenly freed, not only from their fetters, but from the ordinary restraints of law and subordination. Their worst passions would naturally be roused against their late masters, whom they would be taught to regard as their enemies and oppressors. A man's foes would truly be those of his own household; the domestic servants suffer naturally more than the peasants, from the authority of a good master and the tyranny of a bad one; they would consider that they had the most injuries to avenge, and their vengeance would be the most terrible. The consequences which might be looked for if the slaves rose against their masters, and the soldiers against their officers, may be judged of by the revolt of the military colonies which took place soon after the accession of the present Emperor, and which was repressed entirely by his personal intrepidity in proceeding immediately to the spot, appearing unguarded amongst the rioters, and asserting his authority at the risk of his life. On that occasion no atrocity was omitted, and the unhappy officers who had incurred the fury of their men were not merely murdered, but tortured with the utmost barbarity. Their dead bodies were lying in the road, and the mutineers

were assembled in their house of exercise when the Emperor arrived; he commanded his aide-de-camp, Count Orloff, to wait for him, and in spite of all remonstrance, proceeded alone to address the soldiers. Count Orloff, and the other attendants, waited for a time in the utmost suspense, and then approaching the building, and looking in at a window, unable to restrain their anxiety, they were not a little surprised to see the whole body of men on their knees, and the commanding form of the Emperor alone erect and addressing them; such had been the effect of their habitual fear and respect for him, and of his unexpected appearance among them, that they had immediately prostrated themselves before him and sued for pardon. It must be owned that Nicholas the First, on all occasions, displays the highest order of courage, namely, that which induces a man deliberately, and in cold blood, to incur imminent peril for the sake of an important end.

After the murders and acts of violence which must be expected, the next result to be apprehended from a revolution in Russia would be a fearful and general famine; for utter improvidence is one leading characteristic of the peasant, and if he found himself suddenly relieved from the obligation to work for his master, he probably would not be more industrious for his own maintenance.

At any rate, during the period of the convulsion, the land of the master would not be cultivated, and

half the country would be unproductive ; the other half being, to say the least, very generally neglected. This evil would, of course, be remedied by time ; the proprietors would, as in other countries, employ hired labourers for the cultivation of their land, and the peasant would learn that, whether slave or freeman, he must equally earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Before, however, the period of reaction came, multitudes must have perished from the neglect of husbandry, and the consequent deficiency of crops, if it were but for one season. Russia has no external resources, she depends upon herself to supply food for her population, and if that supply fails, the population must perish for want.

On the whole, odious and bad as the present Government and system of things in Russia is, and iron as is the despotism which prevails, the country, it must be allowed, is morally unfitted for liberal institutions ; were this doubtful, the character of the different conspiracies which have been brought to light would be sufficient to prove it. These have always either commenced or been intended to commence by murder and bloodshed ; and it has never appeared that those engaged in them had any rational or feasible system of Government to propose, if they had succeeded in destroying the present dynasty. Were it practicable, therefore, to bring about a revolution, it would be doing certain evil without any assurance of future good ;—the pros-

pect, on the one hand, of advantage being so remote and so doubtful, and the evils on the other hand to be incurred so imminent and so dreadful.

While the present Emperor remains on the throne in health and vigour, his vigilance and activity, and the respect attached to his name (for where he is not loved by his subjects, he is feared) will, it may be hoped, preserve the Empire in tranquillity. Should Russia, however, have the misfortune to lose her present sovereign before his successor, who is now (in 1838) twenty, attains an age of greater maturity and experience, a dangerous crisis might arise, and the elements of disturbance, which are at present held in a state of repose, might not improbably be roused into activity, as was the case at the time of his present Majesty's accession: he scotched, but could not kill the snake.

The character of the Emperor Nicholas is much calumniated when he is called a tyrant who delights in human suffering. Nothing can be a greater misrepresentation than this: when any calamity occurs, he is always the foremost to aid the sufferers; he is extremely tender and affectionate to his own family, and nothing can be better than the example which he sets to his subjects in domestic life as a father and a husband. It is very evident that he does not dread his subjects, but relies on their personal attachment, since he may be seen every day when he is at Petersburg, sometimes with the

Empress, or one of the Grand Duchesses, and more often alone, driving, if in winter, in a small sledge with one horse, and, if in summer, in a small calèche with a pair, wrapped up in his cloak, and without any servant or attendant, but his coachman.

To ordinary criminals he is frequently even too lenient; to political offenders he is uniformly and inexorably severe; but however this severity may be lamented, however erroneous it may in many instances have been, and to whatever extent it may have been carried, it appears evidently to be always inflicted under a firm conviction, whether just or not, of its necessity.

The Emperor is a man of a firm and resolute mind, and it is obvious that he has laid it down as a fixed and fundamental principle to maintain united the Russian Empire, and, if possible, to allow no political changes to disturb its tranquillity; and that for this grand object he holds that any amount of individual suffering must be disregarded, or rather must be considered as a painful sacrifice necessary for the preservation of the state.

The Emperor Alexander did not understand the character of his people; he slacked the curb till he brought Russia to the brink of a revolution, and the country was only saved from a state of anarchy and bloodshed by the iron mind and iron hand of Nicholas.

DETAILS OF RUSSIAN HUSBANDRY

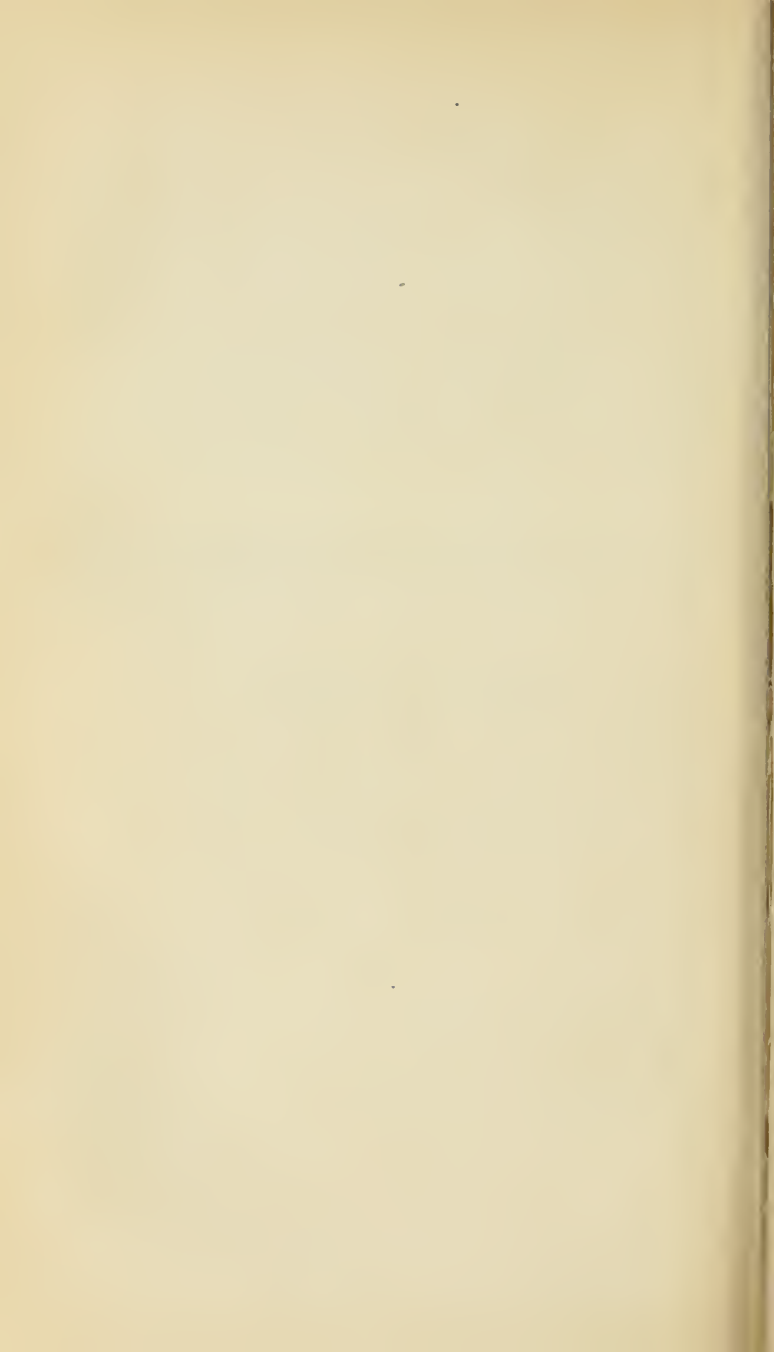
AND

RURAL ECONOMY;

AND

CENSUS OF THE RUSSIAN POPULATION.





# DETAILS OF RUSSIAN HUSBANDRY

AND

## RURAL ECONOMY,

IN A

LETTER FROM M. DE SABOUROFF, OF TAMBOFF.

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I HAD frequently, in the course of conversation with M. Sabouroff, taken opportunities of gaining information, which he was always extremely kind in imparting, on the state of husbandry in Russia, and the system of management generally pursued; these being points to which he devoted much of his time and attention. One day he said to me, after we had been talking on the subject:—"You appear to take a considerable interest in these matters, and if you like I will put on paper a few remarks, which may give you a general idea of our mode of managing our estates, and of our system of agriculture." I thanked M. Sabouroff for this kind offer, which I gladly accepted, and the day that I left Tamboff, on taking leave of me, he presented me with the promised paper, in the form of a letter, of

which the following is a translation, and which being from the pen of a Russian country gentleman, may be relied on as giving an authentic account of the position and revenues of the landed proprietor, and the condition and occupations of the peasant.

LETTER FROM M. DE SABOUROFF.

*Tamboff, February 14th, O. S. 1838.*

You have paid me the compliment of applying to me for some information on the subject of our rural economy, and it is with the greatest pleasure that I sit down to furnish you with it to the best of my ability. As a resident landed proprietor, I am not unacquainted with the subject on which I now enter, first bespeaking your indulgence for a composition which is not written in my native tongue.\*

I think the end in view will be best answered, by a summary description of an estate of moderate size, with all the details of its cultivation and general management. Knowing one, you will know all, for in our system of husbandry there is little variety. From habit and circumstances we follow a general routine, the exceptions to which are rare, and attributable rather to the fancies of individual proprietors than to any other cause.

We reckon our estates by the number of souls

\* The letter was written, for my benefit, in French, to which this unnecessary apology alludes.

upon them, taking into account the male serfs only. This is an ancient custom, derived from the old times, when our revenues depended upon the number of hands at our disposal. At present the case is changed; the land is the source of our profits, while our serfs are often a dead weight upon us. The more so, that they stand by no means on the footing of slaves in ancient times, but they are possessed of rights, some granted by law, and others which have crept in by custom. The law places at their disposal three of the working days of every week, and Sundays and holydays in addition. Their master is obliged to supply them with food and all other necessities of life, and if the serf becomes a beggar, the master is liable to a fine.

The custom of the country is to allot to the peasants the half of the land which belongs to the owner of the estate, to defend them against all aggression and ill-treatment at the hands of strangers, and strictly to respect their property. The exceptions to this conduct are rare, and when they occur, are quoted with indignation and pointed to with contempt; so that on this point public opinion supplies the place of law. We have even, from a regard to their feelings, adopted for our peasants the very appellation, viz., that of *Christians*, which they have given themselves.

With these means, and this order of things, our peasant is by no means in a bad condition. His

habits and desires are, owing to his want of civilization, simple in the extreme. But were his wishes enlarged, he could easily gratify them ; land, and the time to cultivate it, are at his disposal. Our peasant works hard, sleeps but little, is satisfied with the coarsest food, and is by no means an habitual drunkard, though he now and then breaks the monotony of his existence by a fit of brutal intoxication. But even in this state his natural good humour shows itself, the quarrels which these occasional revels produce, though noisy enough, never lead to bloodshedding. Of this, indeed, the Russian peasant has a horror, and murders are extremely rare. Let him be oppressed, and he will contrive to revenge himself by a short, but biting sarcasm. He is deeply imbued with a reverence for religion, and is not so much superstitious as thoroughly ignorant. He kisses the hand of his parish priest, but he laughs at his failings, and is quite able to make the distinction between the individual and the office. Of this I can give you a very characteristic anecdote. Passing one day near a large group of peasants, who were assembled in the middle of the village, I asked them what was going forward ?

“ We are only putting the Father (as they call the priest) into a cellar.”

“ Into a cellar,” I replied ; “ what are you doing that for ?”

“ Oh,” said they, “ he is a sad drunkard, and has

been in a state of intoxication all the week; so we always take care, every Saturday, to put him in a safe place, that he may be fit to officiate at church next day; and on Monday he is at liberty to begin drinking again."

I could not help applauding this very sensible arrangement, which was related to me with all the gravity in the world.

But to return to our system of husbandry, of which I think I have explained the character of the principal elements, viz. the tillers of the soil, who are by no means the mere machines which they are commonly supposed to be. To govern them, a little order in the arrangements, a certain degree of tact, and, above all, impartial justice, are the chief requisites.

A village of two hundred souls (i. e. male peasants of all ages) possesses usually two thousand acres of productive land. The crown, or imperial acre, which is employed in all public transactions, contains two thousand four hundred square sagines,\* or thirteen thousand and sixty-six square yards. The common acre, which as more convenient, is in ordinary use, contains three thousand two hundred square sagines, or seventeen thousand four hundred and twenty-two square yards. Two hundred souls are usually reckoned to furnish eighty labourers, women and men, for the wives toil as well as their husbands.

\* 1 sagine=7 feet.

These work three days in the week for their master, who gives up to them, in return, the half of his land.

The system of agriculture is triennial, with fallows: that is to say, the land bears two crops in three years. Each married couple receives two acres in each of the three portions, i. e. winter corn, spring crop, and fallow, into which, by this system, the arable land is divided, so that they have, in all, six acres, in addition to an acre of meadow and an acre of pasture; besides this, they have the ground for a house, garden, and outbuildings: by way of rent for their allotment, the peasant and his wife are required to cultivate as much more for their master. The quantity of land thus apportioned to each peasant, would appear enormous in any other country of Europe, but with us it is not too much, for we do not manure\* our land, and our only agricultural instruments consist in a very light plough, and a wooden harrow, either of them drawn with ease by a single horse. The fine season being very short, the operations of husbandry are performed with surprising activity. The vast tracts covered by abundant crops, are quickly bared, and the produce is heaped up in open barns. In winter, the grain, consisting of rye, (the staple food of the country,) wheat, barley, oats, pease, millet, and buck-wheat, is threshed, usually with the flail, but sometimes with a Scotch threshing machine: and it is then transported

\* That is to say, in the Government of Tamboff, and some other southern districts. In Russia in general, manure is highly necessary.



into the towns, sometimes to a distance of one or two hundred versts. The straw is consumed by the cattle, and is also used in the steppes, where wood is scarce, for heating the stoves. There is, however, often a surplus which is employed to make fences for gardens, or embankments for ponds and marshes. Our roads and highways not being stoned, the immense transports of produce can, generally speaking, only be made in winter on sledges: if it ever takes place in summer, it is effected by means of oxen, the keep of which costs nothing, since the road itself supplies them with pasture, for it is no less than two hundred and ten feet, or thirty sagines wide, and all as green as a meadow. These oxen, which are seldom employed in tilling the land, but always in transporting goods, come to us from the vast steppes of the Volga, the Don, and the Caucasus; and this periodical influx of horned beasts, which are brought in great numbers from all the confines of the empire, is the source of frequent plagues and distempers, which destroy our cattle, and frustrate all our endeavours to improve the breed. Some agriculturists of large fortune, possess fine cattle imported at a great expence, from England and Holland; but all the profit, hitherto at least, has been absorbed by the expence and precautions\* necessary for the preservation of these animals; precautions, indeed, which, for

\* Precautions, that is to say, against the effects of the Russian climate, to which of course they are not inured.

the generality of proprietors, and still more for the peasants, are totally out of the question. This is the reason why, with our fine pastures, and all the means of having an excellent breed of horned cattle, we have nothing but poor and miserable animals. With Merino sheep, the case is very different; our wools, indeed, are not first-rate, nor are our cloth factories adapted for manufacturing the fine sorts of wool. The consequence is, that, while coarse wool affords to the grower an immense profit, fine wool fetches less than prime cost, and the owners of flocks of superior breeds are only paid by the sale of rams. This is an excellent state of things for extending the Merino blood through the country in general, and the ram trade is at present a very flourishing business.

Now as to our horses, we must divide them into two classes, those of the gentry, and those of the peasants. The former occupy themselves zealously and successfully with their breeding studs, for which they spare neither expence or trouble. The studs of the province of Tamboff are chiefly supplied by the fine stallions bred by Countess Orloff: the grand object is to produce fine powerful trotters, and in this we meet with great success. With the peasants' horses, the case is quite different; they are small, of a bad breed, ill fed, and ill attended to. There is no legislative measure in existence for their improvement; the habits of the people in no way supply this

deficiency, and the breed of horses of this description is utterly neglected, and is visibly growing worse. In this case, as in many others, our system of husbandry is passing through a crisis. Formerly the immense tracts of arable and pasture, and the superabundance of grain, permitted the keeping of great numbers of horses, half wild, but strong and hardy; and the remains of this stock are still to be seen in the hands of our peasants. The people, however, have not yet learned to accommodate themselves to the present state of things, now that land is scarcer and forage dearer; so that they ought to be more careful of them, and to bestow more attention on their breed and keep of their cattle. Habit and the recollection of the time, when they might wander for pasture far and wide, interfere to prevent the adoption of an improved system among our peasants; but it is to be hoped, that when the origin and progress of this evil are once fairly perceived, the landed gentry and the Government will take measures to remedy it: the more so, that society in Russia was never so much occupied as at present in promoting all kinds of industry, and every thing connected with agriculture in particular. The movement lately produced is active enough, and may resolve itself into satisfactory results.

A few ordinary sheep, pigs, poultry of all kinds, and one or two cows in addition to the horse, the sorry description of which we have just lamented,

complete the live stock of the peasant, and help to consume the produce of his land, which he cannot sell at any price, however low, on account of the distance of the markets. In a year of plenty, the different kinds of corn become exceedingly cheap, and are consumed with reckless improvidence, since no one thinks of laying by. And this will explain the terrible dearths which sometimes visit us. But we will return to this subject, and treat it more at length. These dearths arise from numerous causes.

With the triennial system, our manner of proceeding is very simple. In the month of August we sow our winter corn, viz. rye, and a small patch of wheat, having ploughed the ground twice in the course of the summer. In September, after the harvest, we prepare the ground for the spring by a light ploughing, and in the month of April, after a second ploughing, we sow it with oats, barley, pease, and millet, and a little later with buck-wheat. In June, we prepare the ground for the winter crop, and begin to mow the grass, the hay harvest occupies us till the middle of July, and this completes the annual routine of our husbandry. It must be remembered, that the seasons are reckoned according to the old style, twelve days, or nearly half a month later than the new, so that the hay harvest, for instance, does not really begin till July, and lasts till August. I must inform you that the twentieth part of our population lives in towns, and is engaged in various trades, the

remainder is wholly agricultural. Every peasant, as you have seen above, cultivates for his master and himself, in addition to the fallow, eight acres, and mows two acres of meadow. Every acre in a plentiful year gives not less than ten measures called *chetverts*\* of grain. You can judge, therefore, of the immense quantity of our produce, of which more than the half remains on our hands, owing to the lowness of the price, and the prodigality of consumption: two or three successive years of good crops overload us to the greatest possible degree, no human force can dispose of the produce, and our storehouses are not capacious enough to contain the corn, the more so, that buildings of all kinds are expensive with us.† The natural question then is,—why do we produce so much, and why do we not vary our productions; a question easy to ask, but not perhaps so easy to answer. Our peasants being once provided for by the allotment of land, being unable to read or write, and ignorant of every art but that of husbandry, time and money would be requisite to teach them and habituate them to any other branch of industry. Now time and money are generally the very things of which landed proprietors in this country have least at their disposal. They must live, educate their children, and pay the debt to the crown,‡

\* The chetvert weighs six Russian poods, or 216 lbs.

† From the scarcity of stone and wood in this part of Russia.

‡ If, as is generally the case, there is a mortgage on the estate, the Crown is the creditor.

they are always forced to dispose of their annual produce in a hurry, in order to realize the necessary sum of money; and they seldom have in any degree the means of attempting to reform their system of management. I am speaking here of people of moderate fortune; where the property is very great, the case is often still worse, and the revenue is entirely absorbed by the luxury and expenses of the capital, without any benefit to the provinces, or to agriculture.

However full of grain of all kinds our store-houses may be, it is clearly impossible, as you see, to check the production; we cannot dismiss our people when we do not want them, as if they were hired labourers; and in spite of the superabundance on hand, they must continue to produce, were it only by way of employment. But since our hopes rest not on our mode of cultivation, but on the fertility of the soil, and the rain from heaven,—let the rain, as is not unfrequently the case, fail, or a frost in the middle of summer utterly ruin our crops; then prices rise, and every one is in a hurry to empty his barns, and to dispose of the stock on hand; for since the case is out of the common way, no one calculates on its recurrence; on the contrary, the chances are always in favour of the crop. But suppose a second year like the former, then prices become extraordinarily high, and the most prudent profit by it, and hasten to sell their produce. Under these circumstances, let there be a third year such as the two pre-

ceding it, and you have a complete famine, the more likely to be general, since our system of husbandry and the want of variety in the produce is common to all Russia. Owing, moreover, to our total deficiency in the means of internal communication, it sometimes happens that while in one part of the country there is a superabundance, another part is suffering from dearth. Our province of Tamboff is, it is true, fortunately circumstanced with respect to means of communication; since it possesses a central port (of inland navigation), connecting it by the great navigable rivers, the Oeca, and the Volga, with Petersburg and Moscow. This port is Morscha, a small district town, which carries on a considerable trade, and where there is also a very fine flour-mill, constructed by the mechanician Ruodebort, and belonging to Count Koutaisoff. In spite, however, of these advantages, our rye almost always sells for less than five roubles (about four shillings) the chetvert or measure of two hundred and sixteen pounds, and this renders our taxes, though nominally small, extremely burdensome in reality. The tax, with us, which presses on agriculture, is purely personal; it is levied on every male once in three months; and is paid into the chest of the government of the province: the collectors are officers of the crown, elected by the nobility. There is also another local tax for the district (*pour la commune*); but these two taxes are so essentially personal, and levied on the indi-



vidual, and not on the property, that there are immense landed estates belonging sometimes to nobles, but more often to traders and others not privileged to possess serfs, which absolutely pay no tax at all: this is a defect in our system, for the burden of course falls on the shoulders of the poor instead of the rich.

I have told you that these taxes, though nominally small, are burdensome; and I will show you why. A peasant's family, on an average, consists, we will suppose, of a father in the prime of life, three children, and an infirm old man; these compose the males, and we may reckon three of the other sex: of all the family, the father alone is an able-bodied labourer, and the rest (since no branch of industry is exercised in the village which is suited to their strength) can do little or nothing towards gaining a livelihood. The labour of the father must, therefore, maintain eight persons, and pay the tax for five (the supposed number of males); four roubles per head per annum for the crown, and two roubles for the district, which gives six roubles per head, or thirty roubles in all. But the tax must be paid in *bank assignats*, while produce of every kind is sold for *money*; the latter currency being here worth eighteen per cent. less than the former. We must, therefore, add five roubles for this difference, and the result is, that the tax amounts to *thirty-five roubles per annum, practically falling on one individual*; and to raise this sum,

he must sell the produce of two out of his four acres of arable land, and with the remainder he must support his family. Half the year then is occupied in working for his master, and half the remainder, as we see, must be employed in raising the means of paying his taxes, which at first sight appear so small: the peasant, therefore, on the whole, has but three months in the year to labour for his family. The dues paid by the crown peasants are three times as great, but he has all his time and all the land to himself, in place of dividing both with a master: this is an advantage; but to counterbalance this, the crown estates are in general worse managed than those of private individuals. In the latter case, the master aids and supports the poor peasant, and defends him from usurious exactions at the hands of the rich, and from all vexatious treatment; while on the crown estates, the peasant, who is rich, increases his wealth, while the poor man is entirely ruined, besides being subject to every sort of vexation. This state of things has become so intolerably bad as to demand a complete reorganization, with which General Kissileff has been charged.

Besides the poll-taxes which I have mentioned, there are two other imposts which press on the agriculturist; these are the duties which are laid on salt and *vodka*, or home-made brandy, by the government monopoly of these two articles. Salt indeed is not very dear, but the price of the brandy

is exorbitant. This liquor, which is distilled from rye, is sold in the spirit shops at eight roubles the *vedro*, or measure of four gallons, while its prime cost is but one rouble and a half. This impost, however, is at least indirect, and it depends upon the choice of every individual to be affected by it, or not. In fact, though drunkards are to be met with, this is by no means the general character of the people, a fact which I can prove statistically. The district of Tamboff, with the town, comprises a peasant population male and female, of 180,000 souls, while its consumption of spirits amounts to 120,000 vedros. Deduct for the consumption of the nobility and trading class, 20,000 vedros : and of the population, suppose one-fourth, or 45,000 to consist of women and children who never drink spirits, and you will have 100,000 vedros to be consumed by 135,000 peasants, which amounts to but two little glasses of spirits for each per week, reckoning about a hundred glasses to the vedro, and this is certainly not much. Every gentleman and person in easy circumstances takes in general twenty-one glasses a week, according to our ordinary custom of drinking a small glass of spirits or liqueur before dinner, another as a *chasse café*, and a third before supper, and yet no one thinks of calling them drunkards. The peasant, however, has gained this character, by drinking quass all the year round, excepting on two or three days, when he varies his monotonous existence by a fit of excessive

intoxication. Besides here, as every where else, one man, when drunk, makes more disturbance than a hundred when sober.

There is another grand disadvantage under which our agriculture labours, in the land not being divided. The law of Catherine the Second only partitioned the villages; a more special provision is yet to come. This subject at present occupies the attention of Government; but the difficulties to be overcome are immense.

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Here M. Sabouroff's letter concludes. I believe that by the last clause he means that the law as it now stands, provides only for the division of separate properties, and that the measure to be desired is one which would assign to each peasant his own allotment, so as to give him a permanent interest in its improvement.

I think, however, that one most important obstacle to the prosperity of the landed interest of Russia, is not alluded to by M. Sabouroff, and this is the compulsory partition of an estate among the children of a proprietor at his death. This law reduces every man to the condition of a life-tenant on his property, and of course must often prevent him from beginning an extensive system of improvement, which he cannot expect each of his various heirs to follow up, or which, when the estate became divided, would be probably out of their power. The law at the same

time destroys those feelings of local attachment and pride with which a man regards the property which is connected with the names of his fathers, or which he hopes will be connected with those of his descendants.

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The following prices of provisions and agricultural produce at Tamboff, in November, 1837, are, I believe, tolerably correct; they prove the extreme scarcity of money alluded to by M. Sabouroff:—

|                      | <i>s.</i> | <i>d.</i> |             |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Fat Turkeys .....    | 1         | 10        | per couple. |
| Ditto Geese .....    | 2         | 0         | ditto       |
| Ditto Fowls or Ducks | 1         | 3         | ditto       |
| Black Game.....      | 1         | 0         | per brace.  |
| Gelinottes .....     | 1         | 8         | ditto       |

Meat from  $\frac{1}{2}d.$  to  $2d.$  per lb.

Rye  $3s. 9d.$  per chetvert ( $=216lbs.$ ), Wheat somewhat dearer.

Potatoes from  $8d.$  to  $10d.$  per chetvert.

Oats, as I was assured, had been sold as low as  $1s.$  per chetvert, though it seems hardly credible.

# CENSUS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE,

TAKEN IN THE YEAR 1836.

|                                                                                                                                 |            |                                     |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Russian Priests .....                                                                                                           | 52,331     |                                     |            |
| Deacons and Sacristans .....                                                                                                    | 63,178     |                                     |            |
| Male Children of Priests, Deacons, and Sacristans.....                                                                          | 138,548    | Wives and Daughters of Priests, &c. | 249,748    |
| Total .....                                                                                                                     | 254,057    |                                     |            |
| Priests of the United Greek and Roman Church.....                                                                               | 7,823      | Wives, &c.                          | 7,318      |
| Catholic Priests .....                                                                                                          | 2,497      | Do. ....                            | 343        |
| Armenian Priests .....                                                                                                          | 474        | Do. ....                            | 955        |
| Lutheran do. ....                                                                                                               | 1,003      | Do. ....                            | 37         |
| Reformed Church .....                                                                                                           | 51         | Do. ....                            | 6,071      |
| Mahometan Mollahs .....                                                                                                         | 7,850      |                                     |            |
| Lamas (Tartar) .....                                                                                                            | 150        |                                     |            |
| NOBLES.                                                                                                                         |            | MALES.                              | FEMALES.   |
| Hereditary .....                                                                                                                | 284,731    | .....                               | 253,429    |
| By virtue of service, &c., with their Sons....                                                                                  | 78,922     | Wives, &c.                          | 74,273     |
| Petty officers who have left the army and are employed in the civil service, &c. ....                                           | 187,047    | .....                               | 237,443    |
| Foreigners of all classes .....                                                                                                 | 22,114     | .....                               | 15,215     |
| Military Colonies .....                                                                                                         | 950,698    | .....                               | 981,467    |
| INHABITANTS OF TOWNS.                                                                                                           |            |                                     |            |
| Merchants .....                                                                                                                 | 131,347    | .....                               | 120,714    |
| Shopkeepers, Artizans, &c.....                                                                                                  | 1,339,434  | .....                               | 1,433,982  |
| Citizens in the Eastern Provinces.....                                                                                          | 7,535      | .....                               | 6,966      |
| Greeks of Nishney, Gunmakers of Toula, &c.                                                                                      | 10,882     | .....                               | 10,940     |
| Citizens of Bessarabia .....                                                                                                    | 57,905     | .....                               | 56,176     |
| INHABITANTS OF VILLAGES.                                                                                                        |            |                                     |            |
| Peasants (that is, Slaves) the private property of the Emperor, and the Imperial Family, Peasants annexed to the Crown, &c..... | 10,441,399 | .....                               | 11,022,594 |
| Peasants the property of Nobles .....                                                                                           | 11,403,722 | .....                               | 11,958,873 |
| WANDERING TRIBES.                                                                                                               |            |                                     |            |
| Calmucks, Circassians, and Mahometans of the Caucasus .....                                                                     | 245,715    | .....                               | 261,982    |
| TERRITORY BEYOND THE CAUCASUS.                                                                                                  |            | (NEARLY.)                           | (NEARLY.)  |
| Georgia, Armenia, Mingrelia, &c.....                                                                                            | 689,147    | .....                               | 689,150    |
| Poland .....                                                                                                                    | 2,077,311  | .....                               | 2,110,911  |
| Finland .....                                                                                                                   | 663,658    | .....                               | 708,484    |
| Russian Colonies in America.....                                                                                                | 30,761     | .....                               | 30,292     |
| Total of Population.....                                                                                                        | 28,896,223 | .....                               | 30,237,343 |
| Grand Total of both Sexes.....                                                                                                  | 59,133,566 |                                     |            |

In this number, however, the private soldiers of the Army and Navy, with their wives and children, are not included, so that the sum total, in round numbers, may be estimated at *sixty-one millions*. In addition to which, must be reckoned the inhabitants of the mountains between the Black Sea and the Caspian, 1,445,000 souls. There are also Wandering Tribes of Circassians and others, whom it is impossible to number.

This statistical account of Russia is translated from an official table, published in the newspapers.—Some of the classifications, especially those of the inhabitants of towns, do not appear very intelligible.

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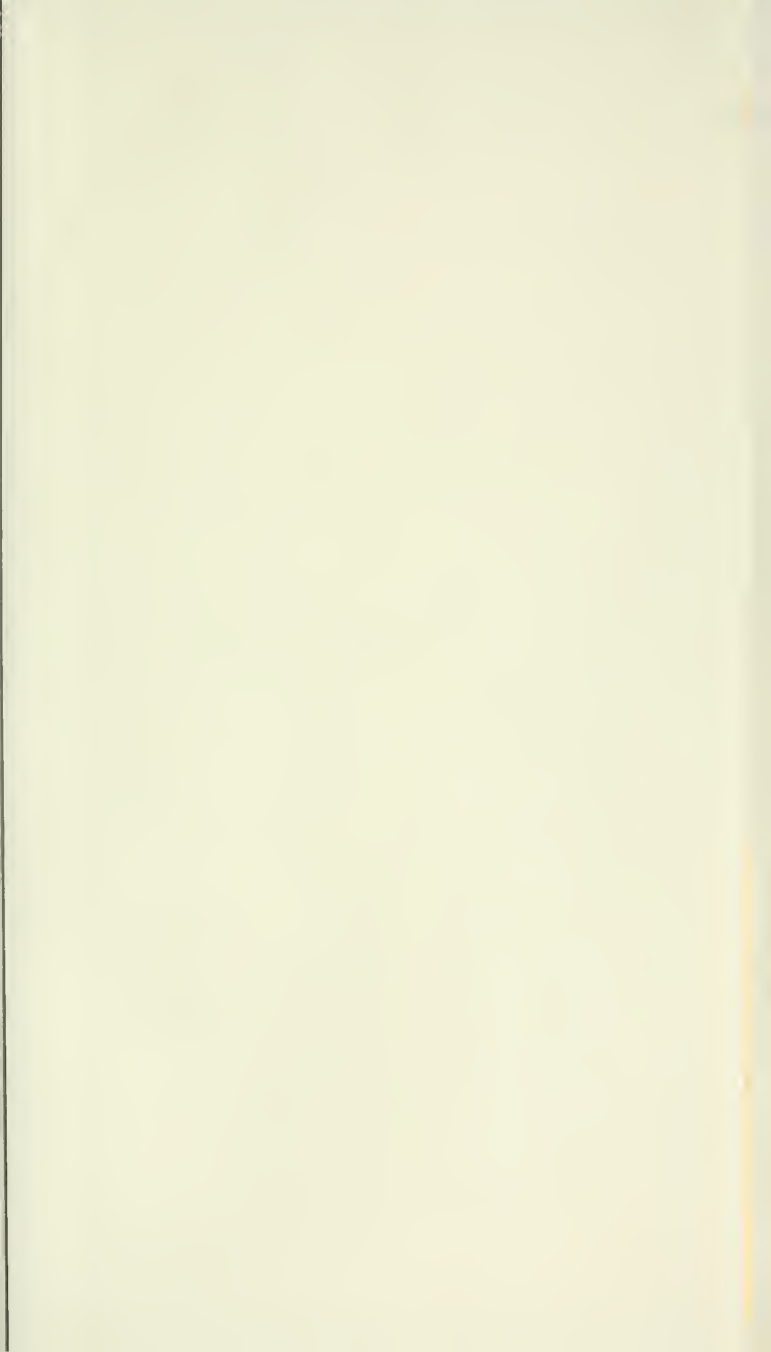
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